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Report

Letter from England

By the time these words appear we may actually have decided to join. I am referring, of course, to the prospect of British entry into the Common Market, that complex, boring question that has grumbled away in the background of our lives ever since Harold Macmillan made the first British application ten years ago. As everyone knows, that application was torpedoed by the French, and so was the second attempt made by Harold Wilson and the Labour Government in 1967. After that, English public opinion, formerly in favour, went sour on the whole thing; opinion polls showed large majorities against British entry, and nobody one talked to wanted to have anything to do with it. But now the third application, made by Edward Heath, seems to have succeeded; at least the French have been unexpectedly accommodating on questions where they were previously quite inflexible, and the British government has pronounced itself satisfied with the terms so laboriously negotiated at Brussels. So now it will be for Parliament to decide. Which means, I suppose, that it will be treated as a party matter, and that the Conservatives' small but adequate majority in the Commons will be enough to push it through if the Labour party takes an official stand against, as now looks increasingly likely. Political polarization on the issue seems inevitable, though it has not so far been a simple party matter. There is a noisy but not very influential minority of the Conservative party who are against British entry into the EEC, of whom the most celebrated is that pure-white British nationalist, Enoch Powell. And there is a more significant group of Labour pro-Marketeers, including men like Roy Jenkins, deputy leader of the party and former Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Denis Healey, former Minister of Defence. Lord George-Brown (the former Labour Foreign Secretary, who adopted that piquant title when he went to the House of Lords) has declared himself firmly in favour of entry on the present terms, and has challenged Wilson—notoriously no great friend of his—to support them.

I don't want to burden readers of this letter with political minutiae that will be past history, probably, by the time it is printed. But the larger issues are important and worth dwelling on. For the first time since the Second World War a political decision made in Britain is really going to affect our future; and, as the pro-Marketeers have insisted, this will be equally true even if the country decides *not* to go into Europe. To speak for myself, I was rather naively and ignorantly pro-Market in 1961 and 1962, and then swung against after the French rebuffs. Until quite recently I could still see no particular reason for

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entering Europe, as the economic arguments against seemed just as strong as those in favour of joining. The strident voices saying that Britain would be doomed if she entered the Common Market cancelled out the equally strident voices saying that Britain would be doomed if she didn't. And why should we put up the the Common Agricultural Policy which meant subsidizing inefficient French farmers, and see the cost of food rise in Britain? All relevant considerations, certainly, but quite recently and suddenly the point came home to me that despite appearances the real issues are not economic at all, and that the professional economists can be left to go on contradicting each other with more and more elaborate and unintelligible arguments and sets of statistics. Once off the hook of trying to understand the economic factors, one realized that the true decision is political and historical. One had lived for so long with the mildly masochistic though not deeply troubled assumption that there was no particular future in sight for Britain, that it was rather a shock to realize that the well-worn rhetoric about our future lying with Europe did actually make sense. In the end, the possibility of a united Europe means more than the price of butter (and in any case, the price of butter, that emblem of the anti-Market case, has been soaring under the Conservatives). And I don't think I'm alone in this transformation of attitudes. Talking the other day to a friend, a young businessman, I found that his ideas and mine had swung round in much the same way during the past few months. I still wouldn't think of myself as a particularly enthusiastic Marketeer; there are too many unattractive features of the Community as it now exists for that, but it seems to offer more possibilities for this country than continuing on an isolationist course.

I am talking now about feeling rather than a calculated or rational conviction. But that, after all, is what impels people to make most of the big decisions in life, like, for instance, getting married. And one can at least try to define what constitutes the feeling. Taking the global view, one has a sense that people are slightly more grown-up in Western Europe than in other parts of the world, and that it is natural for like-minded people to draw together for their mutual benefit. And one day, hopefully, the association might include the rest of Europe too. Inevitably, there are implications of smugness about such an argument, and the familiar notion of the rich men's club turning its back on the rest. In fact, one understands that the Six have done a good deal more in providing aid to the Third World than Britain. An opinion poll taken in 1969 in Britain and the Six asked if we were "for or against using part of our taxes to help poorer countries outside Europe." In Britain, 51% of the answers were opposed, and in the Common Market countries the negative responses were much lower, ranging from 18% in Italy to 33% in France. Another constituent of the feeling I am trying to define is that the other kinds of association that once seemed open to Britain are now no

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longer so attractive or even viable. British politicians still like to talk respectfully about the Commonwealth from time to time, usually as part of an anti-Market argument, but it is hard to see whether the idea of the Commonwealth has any meaning at all at this stage of history. Our relations with the Irish Republic, which left the Commonwealth in 1948, are, despite the Ulster problem, a good deal more friendly than they are with many countries that remain formally part of the Commonwealth. The whole curious institution is hardly significant enough to be wound up, but it is undoubtedly fading away, like the Cheshire Cat. Again, the "special relationship" with the United States about which one heard so much in the 'fifties is now looking much less special, in fact positively ordinary, however much Heath may appear as Tweedledum to Nixon's Tweedledee. The Atlantic has grown wider lately and, as I wrote in my last letter, America no longer provides a certain or welcome image of our future. At the same time, the present and growing reality of American economic domination is a motive in the search for a European alternative.

The entry into Europe, if it happens, will, I think, have a very particular symbolic significance, since it will mark the end of the blue-water phase of British history, which began with Drake and Raleigh and perhaps had its first hint of dissolution at the Battle of Jutland in 1916, when the Royal Navy failed to inflict a decisive defeat on the German fleet. Now, with the disappearance of that extraordinarily short-lived institution, the British Empire—its apogee lasted no more than a few decades—the myth of the great sea-going power, of Britannia ruling the waves, has lost its *raison d'être*. If so, there is a special irony in the fact that it should be our yachtsman Prime Minister, bluff Skipper Ted, who is busily winding it up. None of this will be accomplished without much stress and strain, quite apart from short-term economic burdens, since the British people will have to change profoundly not only their ideas but their basic self-image. But if the progress is painful it will provide an ample excuse to indulge in our national vice of mild masochism, so often found in a mystifying and unpleasant combination with complacency and self-satisfaction. There were some sharp but apt comments on this point contributed to a recent *Encounter* symposium on the Common Market by that grand old stager of the mid-fifties, Colin Wilson, author of *The Outsider,* still going strong after many more books. He wrote, "there is something peculiarly unlikeable about the British temperament, and I think that a closer liaison with the main body of Europe might improve it. There is something naturally closed and narrow-minded about us, and I suspect this is due to the geographical accident of our being separated from Europe by a body of water." The body of water is not going to disappear, of course, even if we do join the Market, and Wilson's points are a bit over-stated: if I were asked which European people would invite such epithets as "peculiarly unlikable"

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and "closed and narrow-minded" I would incline to say the French rather than the English. Still, let's not be petty. Wilson does have a point, and he colourfully enlarges on it:

> We are patient, plodding, and empirical; we are like blinkered cart-horses; we put up with a lot. But the trouble with patient, stupid people is that once they begin to build up grudges, nothing will dislodge them. Over the past twenty-five years, the English have built up a national grudge—perhaps due to disappointed expectations after winning the War—and now it is so firmly established that the country resembles one of those Strindbergian households where everybody nags and tries to make everybody else miserable. . . . The economic advantages and disadvantages don't matter a damn. The one thing that is certain is that England needs the wind of change—a bloody hurricane if possible. Short of filling in the English channel with concrete, the EEC seems the best the future has to offer.

I suspect that many people in the anti-Market camp realise this very well, and that a deep-seated fear of change is a primary motive in their increasingly loud opposition. I can understand and respect the position of a professional economist who, having done his sums, concludes that the balance of economic advantage would not lie in our entering the Market, and who is too much of an empiricist to see any significance in larger questions about Britain's future role. Again, one can respect the opposition of those who, on political or humane grounds, are so concerned with the effect of rising food prices on the cost of living that they refuse to consider anything else. But apart from such reasoned opposition there is much that is irrational and even hysterical. On the far right one sees the emergence of Leagues of Britons among *fascisant* crackpots determined to defend British sovereignty. Far more significant and depressing is the generally negative stand of the trade unions: an instinctive xenophobia has never been far below the surface of the British labour movement, and is one of its least attractive features. The Cambridge critic and teacher, Raymond Williams, who is one of the most humane and thoughtful intellectuals of the far left, is not enthusiastic for the present EEC which he regards as merely a mode of capitalist integration. Nevertheless he sees more possibilities for socialist development if Britain joins Europe than in trying to go it alone, and has remarked, "the degree of traditionalism and chauvinism in some of the anti-Market campaign is very worrying though not surprising." It is as though at this moment of crisis some strange monster of English nationalism had emerged Kraken-like from the depths of the national consciousness, making distressed, xenophobic noises. It seems that traditional folk memories of the dreaded foreigner are being revived, going back to the Armada, perhaps to Agincourt. Only yesterday we

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had to fight against Napoleon or the Kaiser or Hitler, and now the foreigners are once more trying to do us down. Absurd stories are circulated: once in the Market our monarchy will be in danger (the Dutch and the Belgians haven't had any trouble); or we shall all be regimented into carrying identity cards (practice varies according to established national tradition, and has nothing to do with EEC membership).

Leaving these large economic and political questions, and turning to matters of intellectual life I think I see signs of a greater openness to European ideas, or at least a dissatisfaction with the kind of insularity that so far has been happily taken for granted. This is interestingly apparent on the intellectual left in the pages of the *New Left Review* which devotes much of its time to discussing the main currents of contemporary European Marxist thought. Here, at least, Lukács and Gramsci, Goldmann and Althusser are familiar names; and "theory," nearly always a rather dirty word in the habitual climate of English empiricism, is employed in a highly honorific sense. The intellectual rigour is extreme and rather hermetic, and the *NLR* is riven with the kind of scholastic factionalism that one expects in such an intellectual pressure-cooker. Recently Raymond Williams contributed a warm tribute to Lucien Goldmann, which I found significant, since Williams' intellectual formation has always been very English, stemming partly from Leavis and partly from the native radical tradition. (In a less portentous way, the more pragmatic figure of Richard Hoggart, who was often bracketed with Wiliams after the publication of *The Uses of Literacy,* is now working in Paris as Assistant Director General of UNESCO, where he is reported as speaking fluent French with a Yorkshire accent.) One of the *NLR* group, my kinsman Peter Wollen, who is deeply read in structuralist theory, has applied it to the cinema, in a very interesting book called *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema,* which was not surprisingly dismissed as unintelligible by the *New Statesman*'s film critic.

Structuralism, to be sure, is a word that falls readily and not very meaningfully from the lips, and I am not sure whether it has much to offer Anglo-American literary criticism. Some English literary academics are finding virtue in Roland Barthes; personally, I thought there were some interesting ideas but not much indication of a method in *Writing Degree Zero.* However it has been highly praised by Professor Graham Hough of Cambridge, who is a late but enthusiastic convert to the procedures of modern French criticism, after a lifetime spent in conventional Eng. Lit. Far more people talk about Lévi-Strauss than have actually read him, certainly, and I suppose that of those who have read him not all that many really understand him (and I wouldn't include myself in that select band). Anthony Burgess, who is a linguist as well as a novelist, seems to have found

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inspiration in his ideas, and Burgess' newest novel, called *MF,* is a lively but cryptic expression in fiction of some of Lévi-Strauss' key notions.

But if structuralism isn't really for us, and Marxism is only for those who can first swallow the Theory of Surplus Value, an interest in anthropology and myth is certainly trickling into English criticism. I am thinking particularly of the work of Frank Kermode. His *The Sense of an Ending* didn't make a lot of impact when it came out four years ago: it was a difficult book, packed with Kermode's astonishingly broad and deep reading, and written in his glittering, mandarin prose. Yet since then its influence has unobtrusively spread, so that everyone (pardon the rhetorical exaggeration) is talking about "fictions" and "models" and "myths," whereas it seems only yesterday, in the Leavisian heyday, that the proper words were "moral sensibility" and "reverent openness to life" and "marvellous verbal sensitivity." Borges, the author of *Fictions,* is suddenly (and rightly) much admired: he was recently lecturing in London, but I made no effort to hear him, since I feel that the essence of Borges must be in his writing rather than in what is revealed in a personal appearance.

The Sense of an Ending helpfully directs our attention at the myths of future disaster which are building up as we lurch onward to the end of the millennium. Projections of eco-catastrophe make the headlines nearly every week, and though they are based on real empirical data which we must take seriously, they are undoubtedly programmed and structured by a pervasive apocalyptic ideology, as our own *fin de siècle* casts its shadow. As Kermode so persuasively shows, there are close relations between winding up the plot of a small-scale fiction and devising endings on a really grand scale. Kermode is, of course, more interested in what literature is and how it works, than in the good it does, though he makes uneasy gestures towards the "consolatory" power of myths and fictions. But he is undoubtedly a formalist, to whom talk of "moral health" doesn't come easily. He has been attacked as the representative of a "new formalism" by John Bayley, and I think there is more of it on the way; in, for instance, a forthcoming work called *The World and the Book* by Gabriel Josipovici, a brilliant young Sussex academic, who is as much at home in French criticism as in English. It could be that we are in for a new Aristotelianism, rather than the diluted Platonism that looks at literature ultimately in terms of "moral" rather than "aesthetic" values. It could even be that a distinguished English tradition that runs from Wordsworth to Arnold and Lawrence and Leavis is finally in decline. If so, that will leave a really striking sense of an ending, and provide fresh evidence, for those who need it, of an un-British subversion of our native values and customs.

—BERNARD BERGONZI

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Notes on Contributors

BERNARD BERGONZI is Professor of English at the University of Warwick. He is the author of *The Situation of the Novel* and *T. S. Eliot.*

LAURENCE LIEBERMAN is spending next year in Japan and Hawaii on an Associate Fellowship from the Illinois Center for Advanced Study.

RICHARD PEVEAR* was brought up on Long Island and has been living for the past six years in the area of southern New Hampshire and the lower Maine coast. He taught briefly at the University of New Hampshire, but is presently earning his living as a rose cutter for a commercial florist. Mr. Pevear is a poet and this essay is his first publication.

DANIEL HOFFMAN has been awarded a grant for poetry by the Ingram Merrill Foundation. His most recent book is *Broken Laws* (Oxford University).

PHILIP LEVINE has two new books in the works, *Red Dust* (Kayak) and *They Feed They Lion* (Atheneum).

IRVING SINGER is on sabbatical from M.I.T., where he is a Professor of Philosophy. He is spending the year in London on a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.

ZULFIKAR GHOSE lives in Austin and teaches at the University of Texas. His third book of poems, *The Violent West,* is shortly to appear from Macmillan, London, who will also be publishing his two new novels, *The Incredible Brazilian* and *Crump's Terms.*

DANIEL BRYANT*, a Woodrow Wilson Fellow for 1971-72, is beginning graduate work at the University of British Columbia. He has recently completed a translation of the works of Li Hou-Chua, a Chinese poet of the ninth century. HU SHIH (1891-1962) was one of the leading writers and intellectuals of 20th-century China. "A Smile" was one of the poems with which Dr. Hu launched the movement for vernacular poetry. This movement was the foundation of modern Chinese poetry, but Hu's reputation has suffered a decline due to his association with the Nationalist government.

(Continued on page 481)

Cinema Borealis: Ingmar Bergman and the Swedish Ethos

By Vernon Young

Vernon Young, film critic for the *Hudson Review,* writes, "I think it is impossible to convey an adequate estimation of Ingmar Bergman's art without examining the emotional and intellectual sources of his experience." Mr. Young has set himself an imposing task. This is not just another film book. It is a serious attempt to understand Bergman and his art as shaped by his culture. With wit, bite and a deep knowledge of film and Swedish culture, Mr. Young has written a book that must surely rate as an important contribution to the study of Bergman, Swedish cinema and the Swedish ethos. The book contains twenty pages of pictures, a Bergman Film Chronology and Chronology of Bergman's Plays.

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GARY SNYDER

Control Burn

What the Indians
here
used to do, was,
to burn out the brush every year.
in the woods, up the gorges,
keeping the oak and the pine stands
tall and clear
with grasses
and kitkitdizze under them,
never enough fuel there
that a fire could crown.

Now, manzanita,
(a fine bush in its right)
crowds up under the new trees
mixed up with logging slash
and a fire can wipe out all.

Fire is an old story.
I would like
with a sense of helpful order,
with respect for laws
of nature,
to help my land
with a burn. a hot clean
burn.

(manzanita seeds will only open
after a fire passes over
or once passed through a bear)

And then
it would be more
like
when it belonged to the Indians

before.

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JOSEPH BENNETT

A Cambodian Diary

August, 1969

APPROACHED FROM EITHER SIDE, the country is an oasis of quiet and contentment in the midst of an America-wracked area. To the west is the harsh cacophony of Bangkok with its screaming tires, its traffic jams, its blaring Miami hotels, its hordes of restless G.I.'s on leave, surging the pavement, renting cars—Bangkok a vast jukebox, gimcrack plaster temples, miles of whores—military vehicles everywhere, the consciousness of American power cresting higher and higher, in a total aimlessness, seeking some vast combustion . . . the planes streaking overhead . . .

From this exercise in the dynamics of waste and the havoc of sensibility, the destruction of composure, of analysis, of stance, the unbalancing of poise—the Pentagon relaxing in Las Vegas, the astronauts on holiday . . . to drop down from the skies in a peaceful little airliner marked "Royal Air Cambodge," and to drop into that "royaume," is to awaken in green fields, beside murmuring brooks, from a nightmare, and to be told and to be comforted that it was all a dream, that it wasn't true; there can't be a Bangkok, there is no America; America is still tree-shaded, the first automobiles, perhaps, being tested on rural roads in Ohio—

To have an artist for a ruler is a novel experience for a nation, even a small one—we are familiar with Nero's histrionics, with Churchill's easel, with Eisenhower's palette; are aware that Hitler was once a sign painter—Mao a female impersonator on the classical stage—of all these Nero alone had ambitions of professional status, wept over his accomplishments—the others, a means of relaxation, or an earlier method of making a living—

His Highness Prince Norodom Sihanouk, uniting in his person the royal lines of Sisowath and Norodom, claiming descent from the Khmer kings who fled from Angkor to escape the Siamese incursions of the fifteenth century, the two royal families settling in the plain of the Mekong and then finally, prodded by the French, by this little stupa on a hillock by a bend where

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the Tonle Sap is joined to the all-flooding Mekong—hoping that history will ignore them—

The Siamese to the west the traditional enemy, gnawing, devouring, pushed in turn by the demonic Burmese warlords; to the east, the Chinese in their Annamese form, less disturbing, more debilitated—the royal families, all descended from King Ang-Duong, were taken up and made much of by the French, who, using Siam as a neutral stretch of ground for their struggle with the British colonial power, in 1907 wrested the western part of the Khmer territories from the Siamese at the conference table.

This was ostentatiously restored to the Sisowaths and the Norodoms and since it contained the ancient Khmer capital of Angkor, once again, after five hundred years, the Khmers had a consciousness of national and dynastic identity.

Sihanouk had an excellent education and returned to Cambodia a devotee of the *beaux-arts*.

His portrait greeted you in the small, relaxed airport buildings; there was an intimacy among the staff, a familial relationship—quiet, calm, happy and effortless—papers were meant to be stamped, not pored over or puzzled out—the important thing was the smile—no American military were allowed in the country, no representative, or employee of American government, there was no embassy or legation—all believed in serenity, in a tenor of life, no struggle—a well-regulated kingdom.

From the secluded, sylvan, inactive (no American airlines) airport, a miniature bus set out alone on the lonely road.

Automobiles seemed to have been abolished; there were bicycles and carts, a few lorries; the trees arched overhead, leaves rustled—where were the clogged superhighways leading to the Bangkok airport? There seemed to be one or two factories, inactive, deserted, entrepots of brick and lime, and then, inside the town, broad Haussmann avenues, broken into four, sometimes six, paths for vehicles through the interconnecting parallel courses of trees.

The mound, with its stupa and plaque commemorating the return of Angkor to the Norodoms and Sisowaths, rose modestly from a great circle of verdure and trees at the end of one of these placid, trafficless promenades; an occasional cycle-carriage, a single horse-cart punctuated the view. The flowers rustled.

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The royal families own a few Peugeots; there are a few more for the government; the Chinese (here Vietnamese) who own the shops and control trade do not own cars; they dwell, as Chinese do throughout the southeast, in the center of the bazaars, above their godowns and shops. They will hire a cycle-carriage, for a short distance, a shade carefully drawn above their heads, their soft and sensitive skins. It is not that Prince Sihanouk officially discourages cars; it is just that there aren't any of them; there is no reason for them; employees of the American government, no matter how innocuous their function, are prohibited from entering the country.

Note that the diplomats refrain from using their own vehicles, except for official functions. All respect the Prince's desire to keep his manicured garden capital free of exhaust gases and the snarl of the internal combustion engine; he wants the flowers to grow, the children to breathe. Vespas and motor-bikes are his special dislike, sources of pollution and racket, immense harm in small packages, reminders of that Japan he found so disturbing on his sole visit. Composure is everything. No one is hurried. Can this be a dictatorship?

Japanese goods are not flaunted. Japanese transistors do not blare out rock music and news; there are no glitter-yarn shirts. There is not even any press. Once a week a French-language bulletin gives snippets of information from the world outside; many of these are encomiastic references to Peking or to that lovable, sweet-tempered, sugar-coated, toothsome sweetheart-of-the-masses, the former female impersonator of the Chinese classical theatre, Mao Tse-Tung, who has one of the tree-lined Champs Elysées French avenues named after him: Rue de Mao Tse-Tung.

Thus filtered out, the world recedes; what is happening in Cambodia? Prospects for the rice harvest, new outrages: another downed American plane on the Cambodian side of the border. There is the schedule of the dance-rehearsals and recitals for the week at the Palace, where his mother the Queen (a Sisowath) resides. He is only a Prince. There are the plans of his niece, the prima ballerina of the Royal Ballet, for the next full-moon performances at Angkor. The Prince can occasionally be seen, rushing in his Peugeot, to the new multi-unit hotel he is building by the Quatre-Bras of the rivers, each individual unit in traditional gilded Cambodian, peaked temple-roof style. There will of course

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be no Musak in the hotel; one or two musicians, traditionally garbed, will be on hand with padded sticks to strike odd tones from a set of gongs duplicating those in his mother's palace.

No western radio music is allowed: the sole radio station for the country strikes these same gongs at all times of day, interspersed with temptress-voiced singsongs of ancient Cambodian folk-tales couched in the phraseology of the former Khmer court, kings strutting on high terraces of Angkor temples; and the soft, effortless music that accompanies the universal village steps of the Ram Vong, where the couples circle, shuffling, but never touch.

There is no news, not even of Mao Tse-Tung, who is expected to be contented with his Avenue and behave as a properly propitiated demon. The Prince, whose mother's father preceded him as King, wants nothing discordant. He supervises the gilding of each temple-peaked point on the roofs of his hotel. He did not build his beautiful capital to be corroded and soiled by the fumes of the internal combustion engine, its umbrella-shielded orange monks to be stricken at their meditations and their strolling by its crackle. The Chinese embassy, prudently, grateful for its Mao-avenue, walks or uses cycle carriages; the Chinese have no individual cars.

There are few jails in Cambodia, laid to the fact that the French built no schools; thus the Khmers did not learn enough to want something enough (a motor, a radio) to steal it; it is a rice-exporting country, thus everyone has more than enough to eat; the Chinese (Vietnamese) do all the store-keeping (how degrading, how tedious, impossible to keep standing at it) chores, what is there to buy (no Japanese watches are allowed in) therefore why steal money from the Chinese (no Khmers have money) since they have nothing in their stores for you to buy with the money? A few kerosene lamps, and stoves, textiles from France—

Banned is the Seiko, the thick, heavy day-and-date automatic watches; banned also is the instruction of the Japanese martial arts: no karate, no judo. The youngsters grow up knowing only a little Thai-style kick-boxing. There are no firearms—the so-called army, productive of generals of the Sisowath and Norodom families, can scarcely get a bullet inside its guns. Unofficially the dictator prefers the "troops"—a gang of harmless, wandering peasants—to exercise with blanks.

Sometimes prisoners forget to leave jail, form an attachment

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to the cook; or jailers forget to watch them, leaving the door open. They wander out to their families, have another baby, wander back at meal times.

Gauloises are preferred, but American cigarettes trickle in through the borders. A whole village will suddenly sport G.I. green gear, sturdy new expensive clothing, captured by the Viet Cong or pried loose from PX stores. In the center of the riverbank monumental avenue, a pile of crashed American plane-fuselage junk, and tank-junk, and artillery-junk, growing daily, makes an impressive sight for the Chinese embassy to comment upon and write to Mao about; Cambodia suffering under the heel of the American oppressor.

Mao is his problem, Sihanouk is after all a monarch; Mao was not very sympathetic to the survivors of the Ch'ing dynasty; its senior member, the last of the Manchus, washes floors in Shanghai and makes public confessions; the family of Bao Dai, "Empereur d'Annam," are proscribed as enemies of the revolution. Sihanouk waves his *gauloises*. He wears excellently tailored suits.

Each year the Queen comes to life with the Reversal of the Waters. This is when Mother has her moment. Kept in storage the rest of the time (someone, alive and real, has to be used for living in the palace), smiling at dance recitals, encouraging *all* her great-nieces to take up ballet, she seems to have been made into the Spirit of the Mekong. During the rainy season, the south-flooding Mekong thrusts its waters northward up into the channel of the Tonle Sap, swelling its lake to triple the normal size. Regulated by the full moon at the end of October and the beginning of November, the Mekong, when the Queen speaks to it, bobbling on Her Floating House, reverses itself and begins to flow southward again, back down the Tonle Sap, in its normal direction. The waters have subsided, the rains have ended. The Quatre-Bras, where this hydraulic drama takes place, is before her palace, and she is annually hoisted out on her great gilt throne and placed on Her Floating House, to remain there until the water is duly returning.

Her portrait is everywhere, cross-ankled on that gilded throne. Can one imagine Stalin's mother, or Hitler's, or Franco's, in every tobacco shop, smiling, and once a year in charge of the local equivalent of May Day?

Prince Sihanouk's wife is an actress; the film festival, organized

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by Sihanouk and with himself on the panel of judges, has awarded the prize to films produced and directed by His Highness and starring his Princess Monique, in each year of its two-year existence.

There are the "auberges royales," architectural (and heavily traditionalist) caprices of his younger days; an attempt has been made to make them into hotels. One, at Siem Reap, is Rockefeller-Center moderne in feeling, with rooms modeled on that of an airport of the 1930's; the Marine Air Terminal at La Guardia gives an idea of what was in mind. On the treeless heights of Bokor, 3200 feet above the sea, is a hewn-stone, rustic, iron grillwork villa, a tropical ski lodge two thousand miles from the nearest snow. No one ever seems to have stayed there, and now the traveler is forced to sleep in a few grisly rooms above a lugubrious casino where the Chinese shopkeepers of Phnom-Penh eat greasy Chinese food and play at dice and roulette. But at Kep (charming, French colonial, reminiscent of a Biscay summer-resort) the bungalows use as their restaurant a fine, open, airy colonnaded pavilion, in Beaux-Arts style, perfectly suited to the view, terrain landscaped all the way to the sea.

Bungalows, bungalows, bungalows—before his obsession with individual, gilded, Cambodian peaked-roof temples for tourists, the Prince felt they should have bungalows, not individual (except at Kep) but connected, highly utilitarian, heavily plumbinged, disturbingly and thrashingly air-conditioned. When he realized that he had a gold mine at Angkor (accompanying the pale, fragile nun, renouncer of the world, tragedy-afflicted Mrs. Onassis), he decided he could make them pay for his personal taste as well; they would sleep on Cambodian temple-styled beds if he so wished. There was no reason too why tourists should not enjoy Sihanouk-made films; one of these was shown every night at Angkor just before the Prince's niece began her ballet across the way; another was of the ballet itself.

The Phnom-Penh museum is room after room of carefully-labeled sculptures; detailed monographs of each section of the collection come off the press. Nobly housed in a red palace in purest peaked-roof style, the museum is allowed no electricity; all must be seen naturally. There are no guards, no watchers, no latrines; a lone typewriter clicks sporadically in some research office far off to the side. Like the Cairo museum (untouched for political reasons) the Phnom-Penh museum shows what can be

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done to instruct the seeker after knowledge when there are no glamorously high-paid theatrical, narcissistic personalities constantly shaking it up, issuing ear-sets, suppressing detailed historical labelings, and keeping the bulk of the collections in the basement so that the selected items can be mounted singly as if for open-air elephant-assisted performances of grand opera. The curator actually did spend his time adding items to the collection and lining them up side by side; he never had a "happening" in his museum; there is not even a toilet, much less a tea-room.

The mini-bus threading the vast, empty avenues, with its eye on the spire of the stupa, ducked in among the trees; an Australian or two got out; we were at the hotel, a heavy, out-flung construction of French colonial days, at one time very stately quarters for senior French military officers. Here a shallow, warm swimming pool was set down in the back with several couples of sophisticated Parisian young moderns, slipping back and forth between *argots;* they were not tourists, they had no interest in archaeology. Plop! one dives into the pool, nearly breaking his nose on the bottom, which is five feet at most; the others cheer derisively. They are always there during the hot hours.

The sun slants down over the Phnom; the trees rustle, the flowers sparkle—one glides down the vast avenue, as down the arcades of a forest, noiseless, around the darkening mound with its stupa, admiring the bright terra-cottas with which the French commemorated the return of Angkor to the Norodoms and Sisowaths—one can climb that stupa of the Phnom, through a side garden, and then descend the eastern approach, with its Angkor naga serpents carved in stone on the rails, and on past an ornate, embowered royal building to the river front. There is a vast bridge, too far to the north to be of use to anyone, leading nowhere, another monument to the Prince, built with the hopeful funds of some friendly, rich power.

There is the Independence Monument, one of the *meru* towers of Angkor Wat placed atop the Arc de Triomphe, on Norodom Sihanouk Avenue, next to the Norodom Sihanouk museum; this last filled exclusively with gifts made to the Chief of State, stamp collections, autographed photos.

But the greatest monument to the Prince's diplomacy was Sihanoukville, with its highway, built with $35,000,000 in American funds. The Cardamom chain cuts off Phnom-Penh, a river

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port, from the sea. Sihanoukville provided an artificial harbor, capable of unloading four modest-sized freighters at once. The first freighters to berth at the port were not U.S., but Mao Chinese. As soon as he had the key to the port in his pocket, the ungrateful Prince expelled the American Ambassador, closed the Embassy, and in effect diverted the port and its 135-mile highway to the purpose of supplying the Viet Cong with arms. The four small ships were always unloading there, brimful of tanks and guns, while others waited their turn offshore. The flags tended to be British, though the supplies came from Canton and Shanghai and Odessa; another problem for the beleaguered Washingtonians.

How did Sihanouk survive? His problem was Mao: as helpless a plaything in Mao's paws as Hong Kong or Macao, he had to prove the usefulness of his independence to the ex-theatrical transvestite. What was the point of tying up divisions of Hanoi troops to hold the country down (the Khmers hate the Annamese —Vietnamese—almost as much as they hate the Siamese) when the grateful and obliging Prince would get the port built at U.S. expense and keep it free and open for the flood of supplies to reach the Viet Cong effortlessly and safely? As the Prince pointed out in Peking and Hanoi, if they took over his country, the Americans would quickly bomb into uselessness the vulnerable artificial port, open on a flat peninsula, and the deeply rock-cut highway. The compromise was arrived at: the supplies flowed through the port and the highway to the east to the Viet Cong; and the rest of the country remained free, adoring their Samdech for so cleverly preserving them. For their part, the Viet Cong remained strictly within the boundaries of the territory assigned them in the east, and did not engage in political activity.

Wise also, the Prince, in not creating an army, merely a few thousand stumbling, well-fed peasants to provide an excuse for distributing generalships to the royal houses. Had he established a military force, Mao would have moved, for the possibility of its use by the Americans would then become a factor. By this means, a miraculous set of external political circumstances acted to confirm the already non-militant nature of the Khmers and make their country one as if shaded by an orange parasol from the destructive turmoil and violence of the American satellites to the west and east. Thus not even karate or judo. Thus the pile

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of American military junk, constantly being added to, on the riverbank boulevard. Especially favored were the tail-pieces of American planes, with resplendently re-painted USAF markings; and helicopter rotor vanes, khaki-green. This was to convince the nodding and approving, hand-rubbing and contented Mao diplomats that all was well, that the dutiful Khmers were seizing the naughty American war-folk who stayed over.

As well, the happy Khmers were preserved from contact with non-uniformed employees of the U.S. Government, saved from having a U.S. Embassy gassing away its motor fumes and portentous bumptious pettifoggery, its Congressmen and libraries, its photos of astronauts, its masters of the democratic style of social greeting. Mao would have become suspicious and closed in. Not even an agriculture expert, a public health official, or a cultural lecturer could get past the barrier. The Khmer tradition was enforced and purified by the shadow of Mao and Hanoi. French, too, remained the language.

The whores, lovely slit-skirt Chinese (never Khmer) butterflies, featuring black silk and skins whitened with powder, long black hair, confined themselves discreetly to the ambiance of the Café de Paris and the Venise—they were luxury whores, tinkling in their French, and witty and gentle and regulated. They were not allowed to have drinks; they did not appear on the streets, swaying blaring transistor radios (Bangkok, Saigon); they were visible only at night. A lower echelon, equally well regulated, fluttered to nest in the evening in the two floating restaurants on the river, much favored by the Australian do-gooders and helpers, who were unused to such simplicity and refinement. Arrangements were subtle, discreet and sufficiently clandestine; nothing could be noticed. A smile, the departure of a couple to a villa distant, dimly lit among trees.

The Australians on these aid-to-Cambodia (dams, health, electricity, seeds) missions were overwhelmed; most had never seen Europe; most had been married young to mates selected for health, strength and good character. They began to disguise the dates of their home leaves; the place to spend one's home leave was in a villa; none of these charming creatures would think of being exposed to the glaring public entrance-way of the hotel, though there were bungalows—

The hotel, in its bulk, featuring large and solid suites that had

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been the quarters of the military French, had in all twenty flimsy, jerry-built bungalows thickly massed flank-to-flank in the area of that warm pool, with its expensive and uninspired restaurant (the sophisticated Parisians used it only for breakfast and sandwiches). I learned which of the two exits (east-west) was the most private, which bungalows had the best furniture, which the most rooms. Night-butterflies could occasionally be seen, faces muffled and veiled, only the white skin, or a jewel in the hair, or a flower visible.

These lovely creatures disdained any Australian who drank, who smoked, or who raised his voice. Quickly the Australians learned to emulate the young pool-side sophisticated Parisians, and at night the twittering of the lovely spidery creatures in and out of all twenty bungalows was as natural and delightful a sight as the nocturnal egress of night-flying birds from their daytime homes inside the vast four-faced ruins of Angkor. They would not enter automobiles, whether to arrive or leave, too public, the noise of motors, the glare of lights, the clack of doors—the noise of the starter. The carriages waited in files, silently. These ladies were skilled and took pride in their professional accomplishments, insisted upon high health standards; the portrait of our *Samdech* which each bungalow contained over its dresser looked down on extraordinary scenes when successful, middle-aged high-income Australian officials became debutants in acts so far unknown in the temperate Antipodes.

The carriage glides along the river bank and it is sunset. Where in other Asian countries most government employees are set at desks, to confound and confuse, here the bureaucrats seem to have been liberated at their various salary levels, so that all can become gardeners—literally, it is true, the Government offices (my constant one: Ministère de Sécurité Nationale) are almost understaffed. The royal families are supposed to become generals, not bureaucrats. So this vast sea of flowers undulates along the river bank after one leaves the *Port des Bateaux*—there is a "Port de Phnom-Penh": it handles goods coming down the Mekong from Kratie and the north, and river-steamers.

The long and graceful lines of the Queen's moderately-sized palace rise up in the dark; people are walking in small groups along the river; there is not a motor in sight to the south or the north along this huge planted esplanade. . . .

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But there is a Chinese (Vietnamese) population as well—all those shops are owned and manned; the retail, the wholesale trade of the country is in their hands. To satisfy them, well out of the Queen's angle of view to the south, the Casino pulsates with light, surrounded by food stalls. Inside the same Chinese faces pore over the crushingly lighted gambling tables as in Bangkok and Saigon, Singapore and Hong Kong; this is the only recreation the Chinese allows himself, a holiday of the abacus, an amusement based on calculation; never sports or physical exercise. Their lusts are short and sharp, like the opening and clicking of a shutter camera, behind their lensed glasses; and they are lusts of money, briefly revealed. No Khmer faces (broad foreheads, wide cheekbones) are in the Casino—the Khmers are too poor; they are mainly dancers and flute players, gong ringers; they don't like bright lights, only faint single flame lamps flickering out of doors reflect their faces, listening to soft dissonances. The Chinese inside the Casino move like automatons, greeting, calculating each other, spotlessly clean; with clothing carefully pressed and creased; no dust on their shoes, for they will not walk, even more than a hundred feet outside their shops.

In Phnom-Penh as the river turns black the wind seems to push you forward; the horns of the Queen's prang-roofed palace now stand out against the dry stars; star-fields appear. A Chinese temple near the foot of the monumental bridge goes bang-out with explosions and rockets, crackers and sparklers; the staid merchants alight from their carriages, ignite their incense sticks; rotate their wheels; revere their ancestors. The temple yard mills with Khmer poor, ragged and bright; there seems no reason not to go around the river parks all night. Next day in the town there are sidewalk cafes everywhere; with the round tables of Paris; tea, coffee, the pressed citron, in the busiest quarters, by the markets; one watches the life; there is great sweetness in the air.

A long Peugeot station wagon, with the customary eleven passengers, lumbers beside the Tonle Sap river for the five hours run to Siem Reap; one eats dried lotus heads at the ferry; none of the villages on the route have been disturbed or harmed. Crossing at last a carved stone snake-balustraded bridge built by the monarch of the Bayon and Angkor Thom, one enters the Angkor country. The whirr of the Prince's air conditioners grips one in its deep-freeze; the bungalows are utilitarian luxury and situated in the

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high silk-cotton trees. A dining-room clatters with the voices of all Europe, seen from the outside.

I stumble out in the dark. There are no lights across the road. There is a wide, vast, endless moat. A raised causeway leads across it. This is very long. Then there are difficult steps up into a stone porch.

On the other side, through the stone porch, one stumbles downward. All light from the road has been cut off by the great closed length of the porch. I blunder ahead. An endless causeway leads on and on, snakes wriggling in stone as balustrades to either side; occasionally, seven heads, arranged fan-shaped, arise to ornament it. Dim small buildings, like islands, rise up from the empty lakes to either side. Far off, high up, is a tiny light, flickering, yellowish in the darkness. Stars punctuate.

A corner of the red rising moon stares out from the shoulder of the black hill ahead. I am walking down the full distance of the causeway and the moon moves out further and further to the right; it is free of the hilltop and strong, vastly distant. I fall under the shadow of a long high portico stretching to either side. I am up against some steps, hard and high, uneven and treacherous. Under the portico, small courts to either side, smudged with starlight, heavily galleried with stone. Up and up. Another court, squeezed together, short, obliterated by the huge mass overhanging it, small raised buildings to either side.

The final stairs hit your nose, colossal, meant for a race of gods.

With the four other high ghostly towers at the corners of the topmost court, the central tower overhangs the earth like a celestial plane. It is a surface bearing the gods, and their servants, the kings, above all that level of unlighted, intersected rice fields.

The courts at the top begin to form shadows in the moonlight. The cusps ascending the towers begin to take form. In the ricefields the heads of sheaves rise and stir. The sandstone, deeply-carved, resists the moonlight. The core of this monument is sand, held in, incompressible, by stone embankments and blocks. If the sand spreads out at the base, the roofs, the cloud city, will collapse.

Now down the long descending galleries and steps, the passages, the stairs meant for giants. The public was barred; the rice cultivators worshipping the kings above. The Khmer deities spoke in elevated tones, addressing each other across vast stages, referring in elaborate circumlocutions only to the most dry and uplifting

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subjects: narrations of their ancestry from the gods; of the assistance of Krishna in battle; of their hurling axes, their chariots, their horses, their fire processions. On these platforms, amid such elocutions, they moved beneath ceremonial parasols, held by highly-placed priestly relatives.

It was a short trip, swayed over by long-handled, bending fans, from temple to wooden palace, and palace to temple again.

The delicate, airy light buildings of their residence were set up on piles, among the cool, high trees, surrounding ornamental lakes, tiered with water plants and fish carven in stone.

The moon is rising outside. It leads away, along the long pool, the shape of Angkor Wat across the water receding huge and hollow with grey detail, defined in the glare. It leads along the road into the forest. There is a high mound, touched by moonlight, to the left.

Across an immense moat, huge solid walls rise, endless in the distance. It is Angkor Thom, an enormous, moon-struck city. The moon seems to have heat, beating down on this empty metropolis, this cubic jungle fortress.

The great gate looms; above its corbel the front face is crowned with a high, receding tower. The east and west faces appear in sharp profile of nose and eyes and lips. The Bodhisattva of the current cycle, Avalokiteshvara, extends the protection of his gaze. His faces are everywhere the same; the faces too of the broad-browed, flat-cheeked Khmer peasants of the region. Elephants feed on stone lotuses on each side of the gate, their sculptured trunks dipping low to sway over this celestial fodder.

The long central roadway leads forward, inside the walls, under the archway of the high trees.

The grayishness, the whitishness ahead takes on a slight blur, a slight complication; there is a subtle darkness within the whiteness. It is a low mass, rising above the trees, with a tower or cone, all whitish-grey, scarcely distinguishable in the white haze which drowns all contours.

Dimly the faces begin to appear, lower down. The building is long, with a central tower; the smaller towers sprout with faces seeing in all four directions. It is Avalokiteshvara, guarding the city, at its heart. Axes radiate to the four walls and the five gates.

This cathedral of protection is tied to the human; the preservative, the paternal, are sought by this Buddhist monument. These

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gentle faces of death offer recourse, soundlessly from their stone lips. Annulling reassurances, deadening of pain; a vast, multiple, gray-stone anesthesis.

A mile to the east, at the gate of the dead, the same faces stare out. Those who go out of the city carried on pairs of shoulders are reassured, as they are burnt in the jungle; their smoke arising as the scent of perfume to the blank lips. To lose identity beneath the devouring horizontal gaze.

Here at the Bayon we are at the heart of the realm of the weeping king, Jayavarman, and his ameliorating four-faced god; it is very late, almost at the end of empire. In the reliefs below, the King destroys the fleets and armies of the Chams; but above, the stone faces of Avalokiteshvara proclaim: it is vain, it is vain.

On the moon-viewing platforms one wanders at the base of the face-studded thick spires. Black lichens cover plump noses, thick lips, staring out smiling into a jungle which steams with moonlight. The trees, with dry, immobile leaves, rise high around the clearing. One looks out at the bright, foaming jungle, listening for the call of a bird, which does not come. The cold black stone lips rise, waiting to be kissed, in the flashing sky.

Jayavarman, who made this, sits softly in the Phnom-Penh museum, late Egyptian, smiling, Saite, of the period of the delta invasions. His platform was not meant for day viewing. The trees crackle, soundlessly, in the light; their hazy density, million-leaved, shimmers like dry snow.

Returning, one sees Angkor Wat arise from its sea, black, blocking out the sky. The super-human dimension crushes, of this Hindu archaeological skyscraper. Angkor Wat never wholly returned to the jungle; monks kept coming, bringing Buddha statues. The peasants went to its summit, in times of peril.

In the Phnom-Penh museum, the statue of Lokeshvara, that looked out from the Gate of the Dead to the smoke of the burning places, concentrates inward, savoring the thoughts of polarized divinity. Along with the statue of Jayavarman, these carvings were taken erect, square-shouldered, through the moonlit jungle, on a journey over roads and lakes, to sit in the wooden, prang-roofed palace, in a quiet, somnolent city of slow vehicles and wide parks. The statues, accustomed to gaze over the jungle, over those wisps of smoke, dominate the museum, burgeoning with suppressed moonlight; their silence becomes overpowering.

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Back at the foot of Angkor Wat, troubled by the gigantesque, the tiny lights of the Prince's bungalows twinkle. In a few hours I am back out again, in the trees, prepared for heat. The pedals and chain of my bicycle creak; the trees are monotonous, the road vibrates with heat. At last, the road swings to the left, past ruined towers of brick, and I approach the sheet of water of Sras Srang, terraced and lion-surmounted, serpent-railed.

A woman sits across the road from the long side of the lake, selling food and tea; behind her stretching back from the road is a group of houses. They are wooden, raised on stilts, covered with palm thatch; sleeping mats of coconut straw; two wooden chairs, the best of which is permanently occupied by the mother of the food-vendor, corpulent, nodding, inarticulate. Cooking is done on the ground below; sanitation is among the trees. The grandmother is house-owner and owner of their small strip of rice-field. The grandfather and father are dead; the house is a matriarchy; the work of the rice-field is done by a grown grandson and the mother and sisters; this is the heart of the dry season; there is no work to do.

I want to shift from the Prince's bungalows with their clatter of languages. The Japanese guests wear kimonos and bathe, interminably, in their rooms. They are not popular, in spite of their heavy expenditure and full use of every rentable auxiliary, their constant requirement for guides. The occupation was harshly severe, and since the Japanese were committed to their Thai allies, the Khmers were identified as an inferior, subject race. The Japanese, before Pearl Harbor, in March, 1941, awarded the western part of Cambodia to their Siamese allies; and in 1942, all of Laos; the Siamese, who had been driven out in 1907, once again occupied Angkor. In 1907, the Khmers tore down the citadel which the Siamese built in the center of Siem Reap with stones taken from the staircases of the Phnom Bakheng, a ninth-century temple; in 1941 they saw the Siamese return in full concert with their Japanese allies. Following this, the Japanese awarded Thailand the four northern states of Malaysia and the two eastern Shan states of Burma.

Japan is no longer the Thai military ally; instead, Thailand has the United States in its place; together, the two partners work at the grand design of pacifying Indo-China. Cambodia, squeezed between the twin American outposts of Bangkok and Saigon, sees

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the Japanese and the Thais, who raped it in World War II, now the favored pets of American power; it sees the Japanese returning, not as warlords to set them at forced labor in construction gangs in the death-jungles of West Thailand (the Burma railway) and Tongking (the Red River above Hanoi), but as luxurious lords of creation who live in the fine hotels surrounded by expensive appliances and treated with deference by the swarms of servitors of the tourist industry.

Of all the Asian national groups, only the Thais were able to profit from the full favor and protection of their Japanese allies, followed by heavy subsidization from America. Switching away from Japan just in time in 1945; since 1952, convincing Washington that the Korean problem was being duplicated in Hanoi, they have made Thailand the funnel for pouring untold quantities of money into the Indo-China pacification. The corrupt and heavy-handed military dictatorship in Thailand is skilled in only one accomplishment: extracting money from its frightened, gargantuan, lavish and helpless ally in Washington. Individual fortunes among the generals, in Switzerland, vary from twenty to a hundred million dollars. When games of dominoes are mentioned, it is Bangkok that is meant that might fall.

At Sras Srang the family of Oeur Sam Bath shelters me. Excursions spring up: to the great lake, with its fish pounds and stilt villages; to the vastness of the northern jungle; to a pool from which arises an immense lotus of stone and a flying horse to whom cling those it saves; this is Avalokiteshvara. Sunsets are followed by dinner in Siem Reap as the moon gets older and more feeble; the Apsara restaurant turns out to be the place where the good cooking is; small, an exterior blackboard, and giant winged cockroaches, like bullets, which roar directly into your mouth and eyes, falling on your plate. I return to the great monuments later at night; then it becomes necessary to view them in starlight, and a new, more delicate effervescence is detected.

More and more I come to live in the ruins, watching the change of light, becoming a troglodyte. At Ta Prohm the four faces have umbrellas of trees sprouting above their heads; slender tendrils of vines attach themselves with tiny adhesive feelers, shooting across lintels and sticking there; then digging in deeper and deeper, etching their lines through the stone balustrades of the windows, wearing themselves through the noses and chins and tiara-headresses of

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Apsara maidens. Stones are lifted and cracked off their bases; the green gloom turns to black. Then to walk back without a cycle to my stilt-house from the fading, inking, undersea labyrinth, along a road shared by a shepherd of thin brown ducks (controlled by a long slender wand, with a rag at its end, held by an infant of five) —to walk beside the water-sheet, gazed at by tall-forelegged lions, of Sras Srang—to eat rice at the roadside stand—not to go into the leisurely, Frenchified rhythm of dances and restaurant at Siem Reap—this is to find the even level of peasant life.

Then to sit by the lions of Sras Srang and watch the stars press their light on that slowly shrinking basin, the grandeur of the day forgotten, the gods put to sleep without a moon, gazing alone into their jungle through the veil of vines and branches—

A return to Phnom-Penh; an exploration of the west bank of the river. Even though it is the dry season, the Mekong is full and miles wide. In the villages, the idleness of the dry season; the only motor sound is an occasional chug as an antiquated, dwarfed river steamer struggles up the giant flow of the Mekong . . . time stops, the trees grow. The population is thinly scattered, even here so close to the capital; Phnom-Penh sits easily in this hinterland; there is no harsh change between city and country; the green of the forests and the rice-fields becomes the green of the parks and the gardens. . . .

*

Approached from the other side, it seems that this country is enfolded in a crystal mountain, far apart from the convulsions and unnatural tremors, like a pool of slowly boiling volcanic mud, of its neighbor to the east. In the central avenue before the Parliament, the National Assembly, rises the newly-erected symbol of Saigon: two immense, roughly-clad cement soldiers, full of reinforcing iron, an expression of delight on their features; helmets askew, their shoulders twist and the bodies strain their haunches above monstrous squat legs to thrust an imaginary bayonet into the entrails of thin air; the whole is a movie-palace come-on for the exhibition of a sadistic film.

All these America-created, America-obsessed cities, Tokyo, Seoul, Taipei, Bangkok, Saigon, have in common a smog that strangles and burns the lungs, product of the exhaustion of so

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many motors into a naturally damp, sluggish atmosphere, sitting inland in bowls where air can scarcely arrive. In Taipei, Seoul and Saigon the filth piles up among the flashing new motors, crawling atop each other's backs, newly imported from Japan; sewage or water supply are scarcely a consideration. At the trail's end lie Las Vegas and Miami, where they all want to go when they die, living off money piled up in Switzerland.

One longs for the austerity of a Marx or an Engels, even of a Lenin; one realizes why Marx and Engels have lost; everywhere the peoples move toward electronically amplified sound, join in the giant rhythm of the motors, of speed, of elevators, the wild spurt of the demons which are exclusively Western, and for which the principles of the Revolution, and its blood, are meaningless. The communal, sharing, austere balancing of society seems ridiculous and strangling; the deferring of individual aims to a mass purpose, intolerable. In India at the temples of Puri and Konarak I am surrounded by a crowd of young Russians; they want to know about Japan, about its department stores, its escalators, its hairdressers; its motors and Hondas and Yamahas and tape recorders, its video screens and electronic doors. Because of my nationality, I am an ambassador of Las Vegas and Miami, the capitals of the future. The children have been let out of the libraries, sterile with political theory, and the factories, heavy with production of machine tools, let away from the gaze of the portraits of Lenin, to a kaleidoscope of neon and flesh and movement that must be at random, without purpose, the exhaustion of the day. There are no more enemies; there are no more classes; there is one more day. One admires the purposefulness and the focussing upon aims of the revolutionary leaders. Now, stranded by history, they are Easter Island heads above the treeless grass, their black granite heads, and monumental beards (the only heritage they have left the young), are as effective a world force today as say, the teachings of Matthew Arnold or Thomas Carlyle.

Their greatness lay not in their teachings, which are probably as much rubbish as Las Vegas and Miami proclaim them to be, but in their ability to hypnotize whole populations, however briefly, into the illusion that there is such a thing as communal purpose and a justification for the organization of society. Like the experiment of Cromwell and the Roundheads, the interlude between cutting off the head of the king, and the Restoration of the mon-

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archy, was very brief. The Puritanism of the great revolutionary leaders has not survived their death; Mao's hysterical and irrational gyration is motivated by his realization that he is an anachronism, an Easter Island head left stranded by the tide. The Bible, and the Handbook of Kapital, alike have been forgotten.

The extraordinary thing was, that like the monsters and the miracles of the Old Testament, the text of Marx could be believed at all, so contrary is it to human nature, so demanding, so disciplining, meant for a society of martyrs and ascetics. That a doctrine of such superhuman austerity could be accepted as the formal article of belief for a large section of the world's population is one of the riddles of history, like the jihads of the Muslims, the Crusades, the diaspora of the Israelites, all examples of the power of the Book. The rise and fall of the book of Marx is another example of the power of faith to cause, for short periods of time, the masses to act contrary to their natures, their expectations, their comforts and their amusements. The next generation finds itself deceived. That Las Vegas was to be the alternative to *Das Kapital* Marx could never have dreamed; too Puritanical and too obsessed; Sodom and Gomorrah he was aware of, but that problem had been solved, in another system. Their triumph over the theories of this bearded prophet was as the triumph of the golden calf; the people of Israel turned back to the worship of idols.

The cement statue is the focus of Saigon; whores, pimps, petty criminals and swindlers swarm about it by day and night. The hard-faced whores on platform plastic slippers eye those lower-echelon beneficiaries of Washington's largesse who are not able to get away to Bangkok, or who have just come back. All this revenue is being drained upwards, to higher receptacles; the intake is enriching those already in power. Even for an evening the higher military will fly to Bangkok; this Saigon is not Las Vegas, merely a gate into the hall of judgement of the dead.

The whores weigh the hearts and find them worth nothing; street after street resounds with the thud of artillery barrages after dark. By a river jammed with barges and steel ships one can sit, threading the barbed wire, and watch the police and the helmeted military crash by, in jeeps and armed cars, and snarling motorcycles. An explosion in the distance. Tinkling of glass; no one moves. American is spoken everywhere. A hotel on the waterfront announces with banners a congress of Buddhist monks from the

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Buddhist countries: Ceylon, Thailand, Laos, Burma (none from Cambodia). Orange and yellow-robed shaven heads pass by in the lobby, umbrellas folded, by the registration desk. I find one who can speak Sinhalese; from the Siamese seminary in Kandy. His expenses have been paid by the U.S. Government, with the Vietnamese government as the paying agent; it is a cultural front for the breaking-down military machine. They waited in Bangkok, putting up at the Wats, for an idle civilian transport. They are warned not to stray from their watchful protectors, lest they be bombed, maimed, or robbed. They look on, fragile, terrified, thinking of their rice bowls in their various jungles, as lost and as high-stemmed as storks on a lake of boiling pitch.

Another hotel, advertised as the largest, the most cubical, modern, stands somewhat away from the center, on a patrolled avenue, listless Chinese at the reception. It turns out to be the temporary haven where low-ranking G.I.'s take their whores; thus the low rates are geared to a brief occupancy. It is like a lost prison compound, or the Federal fort on the Dry Tortugas of the Florida Keys—row after row of plastered brick cells, doors slamming, cracked washbasins being banged to encourage the dribbling of faucets; the whores are blank-faced; the G.I.'s are sullen; it is all very expensive; there is no pleasure, only mechanical relief in a process like urination; the Chinese, scrutable, rest on their chairs in the reception below, counting their receipts; their sons man the paying windows; all eyes gleaming with money, intent on the hard green currency.

The lights go off, then on; there is a dull, huge thud in the distance; two G.I.'s relieved of their bladder pressures and their purses decide to fight; they bang briefly in one of the lower corridors of the huge hexagon, but give it up; their echoes resound for a while. Their hands drop to their sides, they stand in the corridors, blank, having nowhere else to go; there is the dull clatter, and shifting, in the rooms. All wait for the tolling of some bell which will release them from present misery, but the roofs press down, squeezing the air. The senior Chinese, wisp-bearded in a jacket of braided and raised black silk, sits on his throne like Minos, describing with his tail the number of circles each must descend; they ascend to the proper ring; each enters his cell. There is no screaming. The whores are expert, lifeless. Medical stations lie in a lower circle.

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Whores who hope to feed (there are no dining places) with their bladder partners wait outside, while burning chemicals are applied to the animals' parts. Killing is easier than this, and more joyous, the statue with the upraised blade proclaims. The Parliament sits there like a travesty, as if discussions, dispute, voting, proposals, had any meaning. Generals pass, with slit-eyed faces, stiff, bespectacled, in staff cars, guarded. It is hard to tell which side they are on; of course they are on "our" side, but tomorrow, or tonight they may be on the other side, if it profits. They calculate the odds, their minds, like those of their Bangkok confreres, on Switzerland.

At night, above the second most expensive hotel, the roof, formerly a pleasure resort, is just high enough to cut off the view of the statue. It is not raining, merely threatening; around the brown-glowing horizon, which must reach rice-fields somewhere, electric and military flashes fan up; the dull boom goes on; there must be a war near at hand. One sleeps by this rhythm, everything double-locked and padlocked. In the marble lobby of the office building facing the statue, a tout offers to change twenty dollars at double the official rate; the wad of notes stuffed with worthless denominations is pushed into the palm; the light goes out; the men flee, grasping the $20 bill. The brown light of day outside in the smog is a different type of night; the traffic grates; motors of all sizes spit and snap and dissolve the atmosphere; the eyes and lungs burn; one longs for night to fall, real night, not this false, sweating, wavering light, drawn from somewhere deep in the pavement; the sky drops down forever.

The long avenues have the remains of trees, tall giants whose leaves are without juice or greenness, dying from fumes, the Champs Elysées, planted by the French. Trees ringed with barbed wire; military traffic, military police pass by. In the remains of a public park are a museum, a botanical garden, a zoo, discredited and deteriorating; the few remaining animals cough in the carbon gases muffling the city. There must be rice-fields, peasants, somewhere. In this asphalted area, heaving and cracking atop a lake of pitch, the vehicles crawl back and forth, mechanized, aimless, bumping against each other, and against the barrier limits which force them back, crowding their backs up on one another. A girl in an airline office, a girl in a bank, have been sheltered; how do they get from their homes to work? Small boys attempt to get their hands in

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one's pockets. The way back, on the military pavement, leads past the American Embassy. Like a child's castle of the knights of old it stands behind the high walls turreted at each corner; above the gates, barbicans bristling with machine guns, ever-swiveling, a G.I. calls out "Hi," smiling. A staff car with the eagle insignia enters. All snap to attention. Inside stands an anxious, rather prim building. Here is the true Parliament. Lesser embassies and legations are trivial, unguarded; the Australian one, tree-shaded, open to all, is run by two girls.

Newly arriving at the Saigon airport, the mere opening of the door and placing of the descent steps introduces chaos into the antiseptic mass-convenience atmosphere of the cabin. We file out into a sky buzzing with giant airlift; there is vast confusion, howling, at the entrance wickets. No one can change a check; everyone has black market notes. There is no transport; the lone rentable car approaches, scenting carrion. The hotel, a money-devouring machine, is in league with the rentable car. On the top floor of the hotel some senior U.S. businessmen dine or have breakfast. The thudding continues.

To visit Cambodia one must have an exit permit. Another struggle with a taxi. The passport office swarms with desperate people who, until they arrived there, thought they had enough money to get out of the country. I am the only tourist. The hours pass; the closing bell is about to sound. The eyes are burning through to the pocketbooks of the suppliants. The clerks are decorative and obstructive, dreaming of their own air tickets; their function is to funnel the majority of the money away from the applicants before the squeeze is applied. The higher office waits until only the rind is left, exhausted and penniless, scarcely able to board the plane. But I do not require an escape ticket; merely an exit permit to Cambodia.

I return next day. The passport is lost. If one lives there, and knows the methods, it can all be done by a telephone call, a discreet messenger. They look at me to see what I will offer. I know the answer to this; it is that fortified building, that fairy-tale child's castle, in the center of town, with the U.S. flag on top of it. The inner-office apologizes. The passport appears. It is the only U.S. passport in the office.

But why would anyone want to go to Cambodia, an enemy coun-

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try? No Vietnamese, no employees of the U.S. Government are allowed in. It has been many weeks since they were asked for an exit permit to Cambodia. Why do you want to go? What is your plan? What is your work? Why do you not want to go to Bangkok?

But I am in no hurry. I have no schedule. I have fallen down another notch in the hotel scale. When they see that I can wait, when I point out that I can actually go to Bangkok, like everyone else, the passport is handed back. I have not had to pay. The stamp is in it. But they still cannot understand why I do not want to go to Bangkok; that is where they want to go; that is where everyone wants to go. What is Cambodia, just more rice-fields, without any mortar fire.

Returning to the second-best hotel to eat, I see that it has features; an inner court, with tent awnings, remains of a French-trained staff; carved wooden beams and tinted glass. In cinemas one sits with hands in pockets; fingers are extracting money everywhere: money to get out, money to eat, money to build a bar for the Americans and the whores. The more beautiful, the whiter the woman's face, the more erect her carriage, the more ruthless her nature; they have a gift for business. They are sharp and clutching; these are business-women; they are desperate.

No one can sleep; the women fill up with barbiturates; wake up again, and watch their bars and restaurants and taxi-fleets. The brown and scaling wart throbs and throbs; it cannot stop heaving and moving and breathing in its fumes; it will not sleep ever, but watch and wait. The Americans will not lose, they are counting on that; they have their money on it; else there would be no shops or bars or whore-operators; the money would then all be in Switzerland.

But it earns such high returns here; just a little more, just a little more time, while it can earn, only part being siphoned off; besides, the American Presidents are both on their side. When a rocket comes in, near the center, no one hears it until the heavy crash; there is a hole in the pavement; gutted trucks and buildings. Badly guided, coming from a distance, they don't seem to hit anything important. Viet Cong creep in and bomb a city street, kill a policeman, a few whores, try to get a general. The Catholics, French-educated, French-protected, are the ruling class; their prudence is to have half their money outside the country; the earning

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half, inside, gives them their local living, and its profits are drained abroad. Taxes, by a series of stratagems, hit mainly the poor. When the shops and the bars and the whores close their shutters, that will be the time to leave; for they will all know when the Viet Cong is coming, when the corpse has been devoured to the bones. And the regime of Hanoi is one of austerity. No dance of death. No profits. Fade out into the rice-fields. Get aboard a junk, if you can't get into one of those last airplanes. But if your destination is indeed Switzerland, you will have no trouble getting a luxury seat.

Saigon booms, under Nixon. For a while, in 1968, when Johnson lost his nerve, it was ready to cash in. Now it knows that it will stay, as long as there is a dome on the Potomac. Abandonment of Saigon or Bangkok would be as unthinkable as abandonment of Las Vegas or Miami; the latter provide recreation; the former provide a purpose which gives each administration a focus for its energies and its worries, gives it a *raison d'être*. Here Old Glory waves with a defiant thrust, and beats its helicopter rotor vanes, screaming and coursing over jungle and paddies; there *is* an American power; it is valid, it is virile, it is enterprising.

The American intention, that the world shall be free, goes out in the military air traffic over Saigon. Our hopes are centrist and executive and ameliorative. To say that thus and so-and-so can put a stop to Saigon, can be elected and cut out and cauterize, is to ignore the moralistic basis of American power, that white-gowned girl going down the steps of the White House, while her Texas or California daddy beams, to be married to a young lawyer, a young soldier, or businessman. It is fashionable to say that Kennedy was a hero and Johnson a villain, but both were steps in the process. The man swiveling in front of that Executive desk in that Executive office is the heir of all the instinct, the momentum and the rhythms that make the American past mythic and make it necessary for that myth to be projected into the future; as impossible for a McCarthy to put a halt to Saigon as, say, for Truman to have put a halt to World War II. The Presidential seed is full of white-clad daughters, and it is these whom we are protecting in Saigon, by subsidizing the whores. The guns boom on, but they are purifying. The American suburbs, where Presidents live, the hippies who parade in the doomed cities and are objects of curiosity, are being cleansed, and protected while they are cleansed.

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There are rock singers in Saigon; the blast of electronic amplification proclaims the triumph of the West, not its decline; Mao and Ho and Marx would have us do without these things; thus they are the losers; they have miscalculated the future. The girl going down the White House steps knows what the future is, it is freedom, it is Las Vegas. All the books, and all the dialectic, all the little red volumes of *Thoughts*, all the useful, durable, padded-cotton blue uniforms are not equal to the blast of the electronic guitar or the growing of hair long over the shoulders. The heroic mortar and rocket fire, the grenades of the teams of the heroes of the Revolution, stepping out of political posters, bear the date of 1917 or 1935; they are no match for the chance of owning a Honda or having a transistor radio, rock-blaring, of your own. The wild, Western, corrupted avant-garde wears the beards of Marx, but the revolutionaries are expected by their regimes to be clean-shaven; they must be totalitarians, living austere lives, adhering to military disciplines; they must be Puritans.

There is an airport bus for passengers departing from Saigon. One gets to a central point in the city; then it lumbers toward the airport, passing the barriers. The desk at the hotel is enraged that I have found this out. At the airport I move in a file of U.S. military and civilian workers.

In the waiting bar, a Bangkok-bound, recreation-aiming civilian worker tells the usual tale of huge salary, barbiturates and alcohol, the dwindling of sexual energy. All is lost, he says, in Saigon; it is a matter of months before the Viet Cong take over the city, the higher officials have prepared cushions for themselves (brothers in Hanoi, transmission of war plans) with the Viet Cong, or have planes warmed up ready for exit. But there are still guns sounding at the airport as we leave. American power is pounding away, as real as the assembly lines of the River Rouge or the blast furnaces of the Alleghenies. Washington is not giving up. The Dome is gleaming. It is only money, and there is plenty of that.

Now we lift off, and the thick brown coating of this last circle in the city of Dis fades into a jumble and a blur, not to be seen again until we encounter Minos at the gates of the underworld. It will be familiar to us, when we see that the black-coated judge has a wisp-bearded Chinese face, for we have been here before. And just as each G.I. takes his appointed cell in his appointed ring

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of that Dry Tortugas Fort Jefferson hostelry of the damned, to spend his virility into the rubber sac of a softly-urinating Chinese whore, we will take our final places, without appeal. But why devise this on earth, before our time? The rotor vanes of the helicopters are like the wings of the lazy, slowly-rotating monsters which hover over the pits and fires, and flaming bogs, and hot quicksands of Doré's hell; pterodactyls, these dinosaurian birds come not to lift us higher and higher into the empyrean where the President's daughter, a white-clad Beatrice, awaits, but into a hospital full of flasks of plasma, flowing through the gravity tubes, where a course of drugs unhinges the mind and undoes the brain.

We will not be dropped by U.S. power back into Phnom-Penh or the flowers or the temple ruins, for we are warned against going there; the Prince is evil, and his is an enchanted garden designed to pervert and numb our sense of what is right, corrupt our sense of mission, so that we will never become worthy of the girl. She must be won by blood and suffering, by the vanes of slowly rotating pterodactyls above bogs and burning lakes, not by sniffing blossoms and sipping wines, savoring moonlight on barges propelled by an evil Prince, who would seduce her while she sleeps. The hero must be covered with blood; he must, in part, look like that concrete statue in front of the Saigon Parliament.

But I, having seen and met and talked with Minos before my time, prefer to browse on the poisoned flowers of the Prince, eschewing my chance to raise my sweat-stained helmet and, putting down my bayonet, to awaken with my blood-stained lips the sleeping Beauty. It is in another forest, that of Angkor, I would wander, and by another castle, that of Avalokiteshvara, that I would dream, my life away if possible.

And so I drop to earth, rescued, not by rotor vanes or a pterodactyl, but by a simple transport. And I come to the small airport, and its small buildings, and gentle, idling, courteous, helpful people. The nightmare has ended. The Beauty, unawakened, goes on to be married. I have not awakened her, and it is she, like her spouse, who walks in a trance. For I have awakened, and it is the Prince who is real, and they who are false. How can they let him exist? How can Phnom-Penh, forbidden to any American personnel, civil or military, be allowed to bloom and flourish between the Dis of Saigon, the Acheron of Bangkok?

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It is monsoon time, and down at the Prince's port, reached through the U.S.-financed highway, the wind and rain soak the sand continuously. I walk along the white strand, among the trees of the jungle. From the hill of the town bazaars I watch the British-flag freighters, four at a time, unloading war supplies bought in the world markets, for the Viet Cong, with which to attack unawakened Beauty on the very day of her White House wedding. Can this be allowed to continue? Will not someone press a button, black or red, on a giant, shining mahogany desk below the great eagle insignia? But another four freighters, and another and another, lie waiting. The railway, the highway, are fully utilized, speeding war supplies to the Viet Cong. The ornamental pile of downed U.S. military aircraft grows on the avenue beside the river in Phnom-Penh; fuselage tails brightly numbered are in greatest demand; downed pterodactyls with their giant rotors.

Phnom-Penh is much dryer than the port; its rhythm goes on in the showers. Angkor is beginning to be wet. The great lake is filling. The villages leading down to it along the Siem Reap river are idyllic. Pigs, ducks and chickens; babies appearing, fat, at every door, every year; the population blends with the paddies and the canals; there is a great rice surplus. We dance at night; I watch sunsets from the three main Phnoms (hills).

The peasants haunt the green underneath the trees, like slender surprised Avalokiteshvaras. Many die young, especially the men; there is not much effort made to preserve life. There is the hospital, free clinics, all that, at Siem Reap, which is a provincial capital. The peasants are not greatly concerned about longevity. Procreation is not a world-shaking event, merely a routine occurrence. The sex act is not of great importance. Dancing is greatly enjoyed.

Mostly these people are contemplative. They know, and have learned, for many years, how to pass the time. They walk and sit and look. Descendants of the last artisans and caretakers left to guard the cities, they belong to the ruins; know where to find individual stones far out in the tangle. They don't want to sell the stones. The flying horse of Avalokiteshvara raises the merchants, trapped by vampires on a desert island, high above the demons; its wings, pieced together, beat from a stone lotus in a dried pool, slowly filling as the rains begin.

Delicate small ruins, of earlier, discriminating dynasties, lie far

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out, with roseate, pillaged sculptures. In the wet season, all is softer, blurred. Sras Srang mills about, impervious to the slowly increasing rain. The cart sludges along the wet ruts; the bullocks have been feeding. We move in a private cloud of rain, passing the misty trees and streams. The odor of the animals, straining at the shafts, is pungent and piercing; a compound of digested grass, and stomach linings, and saliva, dripping mouths; intestines and bowel. As they strain harder, their aroma becomes all-powerful, the perfume and fuel of our moving cloud.

Because the light is failing, the cart halts at the village of Pradak, and the animals are turned to feeding. Beyond the village lie ruins, of Bantéay Samré. They know every stone, leaping ahead. We stumble across moats, up steps, into galleries and halls. Through carved balusters inner courts are seen; we go deeper into the ruin; here coconut oil lights up in a shell.

Above, the gods and demons appear, pulling at the serpent which churns Vishnu's sea of milk; the liquor of immortality streams down the walls. Inside the shrine, the square-browed, flat-cheeked, flat-nosed broad faces look out, perfectly composed, ready to stay till dawn. A carved naga serpent, with upraised heads, winds around the galleries outside, its mouths washed with rain.

They do not move. Here flesh, brown-yellow, immortalizes as stone. I have heavy breathing, vibrate and twist and quiver. Their only movement is that of the pupils of the whites, of their eyes, which must alter direction to take in my eccentricities.

We are awaiting the Bodhisattva of the current cycle, perhaps as a flying horse, perhaps as a woman with four arms, the naked doctrine itself; perhaps as a being with four faces. We await release from the current cycle, through the agency of these divine beings.

Back to Phnom-Penh, then up the Mekong, past Kompong Cham, to Kratie, on the steamer. I go with a Chinese (Vietnamese), not a merchant; the family live in Kratie; they are peasants. Here is nothing but rice and rubber; temple after temple; Avalokiteshvara, slender-headed, in yellow plaster, with ten heads, in three tiers, four, four, and two, overseeing the world from the gates. His wife is a Khmer: we go down the opposite direction, south toward the coast, to Kampot province, on the railway that brings up munitions for the Viet Cong from the Prince's port.

Here in the village I meet not so much the wife but the all-

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important "Sa mère Yen," who owns the stilt-house and the strip of paddy-field. All the men are dead, only Chhea Kan, the Vietnamese-Chinese peasant from Kratie, is available to help the women in the paddy-field at the working-times. He is delicate and shy. He drops everything at Phnom-Penh, where he earns money in the port, when it is time for planting, Sa mère Yen making the decision.

Why did the women select such a slender, refined worker (headaches, dizziness, stomach-aches) for their paddy-field. An attack of everything combined assails him next morning in the rain. Sa mère applies the universal remedy (even for fractured limbs)—silver coins are rubbed and rubbed, painfully, into the area of the afflicted spot, until raw angry weals, exactly round, exactly the shape of the coins, appear, and begin, gratifyingly, to throb with pain.

At least partially redeemed, Kan sets out for the fields, admonished by the stern Sa mère; he may have been saved by his marriage to a Khmer, by the fact he was not a merchant; he may have been driven back into Vietnam with the mass; his body may have floated down the Mekong with thousands of Phnom-Penh Chinese when the button was pressed in Washington. I feel that this must be a requiem for Kan; too fragile and sickly and delicate a creature for the responsibilities even to Sa mère and the paddy field; ill at ease in Phnom-Penh and not aware or informed enough to get out of that river port, focus of the town, in the dry season when he was normally on the barge. They swept down the steps at the port, cutting down the Chinese concessionaires, for which I cannot blame the Khmers. But a pogrom of race claims the innocent as well as the guilty and I wonder if Sa mère Yen is back again at the undignified (for one of her august age) task of working her own paddy field.

Conversely, there can be no question that the Oeur Sam Bath family have survived at Sras Srang; the villagers live inside the temple of Angkor Wat, and the Viet Cong keep them supplied with rice. Naturally they must worship their Prince (they did that anyway) and unnaturally they must let their mouths water over the enticing prospect of Mao Tse-Tung; like any American hippie, a portrait of Ho Chi Minh (this last, one of the Khmer-hated Annamites, successors of the Chams of the water-battles on

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their reliefs) must adorn their living space in the galleries, but it is a service they perform, adoring or at least tolerating this icon, in return for rice—even today they lead you at once to the reliefs showing the victories of the Khmers over the Chams on the Lake; though they hate the Siamese more, their memory is long, and the Chams are as real, the Annamites are Chams—

The Viet Cong has recruited the peasants of the Angkor villages who are of military age to join their forces, so Croi-Oeur himself is now prowling the jungle, knife and rifle in hand, ready to massacre brother and cousin Khmers from Siem Reap, only three miles to the south, and heavily intermarried, who have been recruited into the American forces. The line between the Viet Cong and the U.S.-supported forces lies exactly half-way between Siem Reap and Angkor Wat, where the family is now living. Croi-Oeur, at Angkor Wat, is learning the martial arts as practiced by the Viet Cong in Hanoi; his cousins Posoman and Khou-Chea, who lived in Siem Reap and were my friends, are learning those practiced by the U.S.A. in distant Saigon.

Both sides, north and south of that line one and a half miles from Angkor Wat, are running training camps to instruct peasants how to kill, since each accuses the other of doing so—"pre-dawn rifle training in Angkor Wat." And of necessity, how to kill each other, since each other is the enemy. Croi-Oeur is learning bayoneting and eviscerating, and Posoman and Khou-Chea, children of his mother's sister, are learning rifle-shooting and grenade-tossing. On alternate days they shift classes. It is too much to say that perhaps they have the same instructors, adepts who slip back and forth between the lines to garner fees. But if the instructors are Chinese I would say it is not impossible.

If they are the best instructors, if the supply of field-trainers is limited, why should they not change uniforms each day and go back and forth (so easy for countrymen in this jungle), teaching Croi-Oeur how to hurl grenades at Posoman and Khou-Chea one day, and Posoman and Khou-Chea how to bayonet Croi-Oeur the following day? The important thing is to teach killing, as quickly and efficiently as possible, to peasants who have never had a punch in the nose before. Both Hanoi and Washington would have it so. To Ho Chi Minh's successors in Hanoi, Croi-Oeur's cousins are ideologically inferior; they can be butchered. To Johnson's succes-

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sors in Washington, Croi-Oeur is a communist; he is shooting for the Viet Cong; one more vermin to be gotten rid of. For all the world must be free; Marine Generals can relax in Bangkok, it is a free country; Saigon itself is more for the recreation of enlisted men. . . .

Get the cement up and get it carved. Phnom-Penh, according to its generals, lacks the inspiration of a martial spirit. Siem Reap may plead in vain for a statue of Avalokiteshvara. Perhaps it will get a replica of the Saigon Statue, reduced in size for its tiny population. Perhaps a Las Vegas entertainment celebrity, such as are provided to Saigon, may come through.

What was there in Johnson that caused him to hold off? What caused him to refrain from taking the obvious step in those dark days of February, 1968, when the defeat of his policies faced him with the necessity of abdication? He did not clutch at this last straw, as the generals would have had him do. It was so easy: cut off the port, shut off the supplies, make the Viet Cong divert troops to confront the Khmers. The chance of success was there, and Texans like to succeed. Johnson refused to destroy this fragile, lotus-eating, defenseless, incapable nation, with an army made up only of generals from royal families, an army of epaulets and medals and dummy rifles, ivory-handled ceremonial pistols. There was the chance of gazing down on the record as final victor of an insoluble war.

Now that we know how easy it was to seize Cambodia, Johnson's refusal to comply is perplexing. The drowning man did not clutch at the lotus blossom. He preferred to sink himself, and let the lotus float for a while in the jungle pool, below the walls of Angkor, with the winged horse rising and succoring from amid the pink and blue blossoms.

Avalokiteshvara had a friend in LBJ; or, in theologically more accurate terms, LBJ was pulled up on the back of that horse from the desert island of the vampires, eager to suck at his jugular; he fell under the protection of the all-seeing, four-sided gaze.

Thus the bodhisattva, all-powerful in the current cycle, who renounced his own divinity to suffer in our midst, had a facet in the Presidential forehead; LBJ acted in accordance with the wishes of the god; for a while longer the maidens danced on the terraces of Angkor.

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LAURENCE LIEBERMAN

Island Trashfires

Christmas: three tourist
liners in port, two more at anchor
in harbor
mouth; the largest,
a city-block long, eight ship-floors

high, triple-smokestacked. This year, jets
rival the old army transports,
three tail-engines
rocketing into steep inclines
on takeoff. Hourly,

the Panam whisperjets plow furrows in runway
asphalt, motors reversing an air-wall,
wingspan extending far over the parallel
service road, fuselage groaning to a stop
on the miniature landing strip.

The airstrip clings to the west
shore, a band-aid on a bruised wrist.
Adjacent to the garbage dump (an open sore
that drains the Island's positions around the clock), old convairs
lift and lower

over trashfires
and the bellies of pedigreed
sharks—pampered, overfed, domesticated.
Inland, chicken-scrawny mongrels
pick about in the rubble for waste morsels.

In a sleep-daze of search
they meander suicidally into onrush
of traffic. . . . One airless hot night,

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I drive to the airport road's unpaved dead end,
a skipping-stone's hurl

to the triple juncture
of water, runway and fainting bonfire.
Our hideaway fumes carrion-stink.
My carnivore hand swings
to fetch you, huddled

against your door.
In the lowered
headlamps, a three-legged terrier,
favoring its bandaged
stump, spots a tidbit just over the edge

bobbing in shallows. The mutt
aims a short hop. We see a mako's lifted snout
jerk shut—the twitching furball, headless
in air, falls to the surface. . . .
Vagrant drayhorses

and mules—no crops to plow,
no carts to haul—
are sold for children's sport, or abandoned
in backwoods. They drift over untilled farmland,
straying into paths of semis,

diesels. . . . One morning, a half-starved donkey,
emaciated, is found roped to a tree, three arrows piercing
his belly; still alive on his feet, suffering
noiselessly; in his eyes,
absence, a luminous void. At the hairpin

curve, on the main drag to Island Top Mountain,
the overturned cement truck
lies smoking. Alongside the buckled hood,
a grey-and-white flecked
roan mare, legs splayed like old pipecleaners under her bloated

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abdomen, soaks in a pool of motor oil and blood.
A block or two below, a man about seventy,
with great burl-knuckled hands, motions passing cars
to stop. The drivers, fierce-eyed, look away
from the poor whitetrash master

mechanic; Southern expatriate from Tulsa
in faded cloud-pale blue
coveralls, he carries the secret of pure failure
("Failed brakes!") from car to car, curled in immaculate
vast hands like a jewel. . . . Easter:

dawn traffic, slowed to a crawl—
no chance to pass on the serpentining downgrade—
bottlenecks. Midway on Rappune Hill,
the she-goats, their twitching hindquarters upraised
into motorist's faces,

thrust their narrow jaws
through gaps in fence wire. With languorous
tobacco-chawing sideways chops and grinds, they munch
the roadside clover, and won't be budged.
A ninety-year-old Anguillan,

the goat-boy, wags his pole at the stalled nannies.
As if dancing the tango
or conducting a minuet,
his arms, caressive and slow,
undulate.

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Moles in the Whelk Nest

Along the sides
of a coral-wall, many shells kissing the falling waterline
abruptly emerge, sliding upward.
I can hardly believe their numbers.
Careless of injury,
I leap into ten-foot-deep water
hunting the source.
Moiling plankton and bubbly froth-clouds block my underwater
sight. My gloved hands probe
and slither along sandy contours.
Eyes in my hands.
Mind's-eye in my fingertips. Drop off,
gloves. Fear.
Fear of sea-urchin spines. Long black needles that sink
deeply into flesh, break off,
leave irremovable splinters,
dissolve slowly
for months. Much pain. Swelling.
My fingers searching,
fondling the slime, threading through eelgrass and moss,
sensitive to textures, to smallest
faults or clefts. *Fingers stroking*
a woman's fine hair,
the sides of the fingers—not only
the tips—learning
the kinks, the flowing tress-silk. Deciphering in love-dark
the stiff single gray hairs
from the resistless soft blondes
and browns. Caressing
the coarse bristly hank of curls
over the genitals,
as springingly alive to the touch as flesh; or the soft
thin down on the rim of the ear,
the ear-lobes. My knuckles gouging
into pits and sockets,
wedging into interstices of the reef,

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tracing lineaments
and burrowing into all declivities. My hands tunnelling
like underwater moles, hunting
orifice—the aperture into secret
wombs of the coral.
At last, my left hand drops
into a deep hollow
taking my arm in behind it to just over the elbow, and lands
on a close-knit pile of rocks:
roundish pebbles, stacked one
on two or three
others, spreading out downward
in a pyramid, the bottom
layers containing larger—the upper layers, smaller—ovals.
Whorls and spirals of my fingerprints,
think for me! Note finely etched ridges,
wavelike crests,
at short intervals, elevated
on the surface. Ah!
Familiar shapes. I have invaded the secret nest of the whelks,
a family of shells in luxuriant
embrace, a community of mollusks
all connected,
lip to back, content in a multi-
leveled architecture.
I start prying. As if drugged, they spring up into my hands
loosening in threes and twos, oilily
slurping together—now lip to lip—
as they fall into my net.
The nest runs deep as a lode
of metal ore,
I, a blind miner, with bare fingers for shovels and picks,
knuckles for sledgehammers: the meat
in my skullcase, my ribshell meat,
my gutbag—all hungering
for the gummy wormmeats of the whelks!

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Skin-Flying into the Storm Center

Wary of lightning,
we dodge the thundercloud's blue-black
center—the sky overhead pulsating feeble glimmers—
swimming across the current to escape
the heavy drift tugging us back
into the gray storm-patch.
We are alert for the whirring
steel propeller knives of the French
fishing skiffs, their skippers
dozing; to the ear of a submerged diver,
the whine of the outboard
motors is a power mower in the distance,
up close an electric handsaw: we hug the surface!
A quartermile downcurrent, a tall vertical
flickering shadow appears—
too low for a cloud.
We make out meteoric flashes
of white against sky's pearlgray,
blurred swirls of activity.
We are pulled nearer. Zigzagging traceries
become arcs of tails
and wings twirling like leaves
in a wind-whipped elm: a flock of gulls and frigatebirds,
packed so thick they block out light
like a storm-cloud, chasing
vast schools of fish.
We swim closer, closer.
Needle-beaked streaking darts!
The frigatebirds, streamlining
their forked scissorstails, nosedive for fish.
Now bird-beaks whiz
past my ear, just under my mask-
glassed nose. A sword-blade plunges before my eyes,
trailing a beadyeyed undersized ball peen
head, tail feathers vanishing;
the reversed sword emerges
tipped over, gliding hori-
zontally: it skims the surface,
dragging a wildly convulsive
high-backed king mackerel, twice the length
and weight of its captor.
Remarkably, the beak dismembers

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the backflesh and swallows without loosening its iron-clamp grip.
From all sides, a dozen-odd gulls attack,
stripping clean the exposed fish-
skeleton, while the helpless
carrier-bird makes futile
sideways dashes to escape, unable
to salvage any gob of its prey.
Many gulls thwack into the carcass with furor,
the lifeless fish quaking
more violently than when it gave up
its last life-spasms to the single killer beak—still holding
firm, despite the simultaneous concussion
of numerous rivals striking
the same last traces
of meat-flakes from bones
Voracious, they seem to aim
for each other's necks and skulls,
but zeroing in from all angles—even below—
each hits the mark.
A sharkfin cuts through the slaughter-
bloodied rainbow sea. Flipper-flapping madly, we lunge
from the murky bloodlake into crosscurrents.
Swiftly, we are taken by four knots
of current—holding our arms
and legs like rudders, we learn
to keep steady, steering a few degrees
against the mainstream
like sailboats tacking into the wind. Now we pass
directly into the eye
of the storm. We sense the current
reversing—a few strokes further—without surface signals.
Just ahead and below, I see fish lean sharply
at an angle, or am *I* turning
sideways? Now the fish
lie flat on their sides,
struggling back up, to turn upright,
but falling away. . . . Suddenly,
we are stunned by stillness—a deep hush in the air.
We are motionless.
The absence of current is chilling . . .
Skin sleeps. Air is a vacuum to us. When the wind
blows, do we think, air-thick: *it is this*
we take in and puff out each moment
of life? With this
we ignite the calories,

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burning them to bones and brains!
Listen. *Her appetites*
will never be satisfied. She is wife of the storm
and mother to capricious
gusts. Too thin to melt,
too fine to cut a petal, this chaste pool's elusive.
Her issue can choke a whale, hew mountains,
reverse the pattern of seas
and continents.
She files her teeth on shale.
But the skin sleeps, won't touch
her fierce invisible waves. . . .
Slosh, slosh—all at once the rain floods
down on our heads.
In fear of drowning, absurdly,
we drop masked faces in the sea. Just under the surface,
preternatural blue-grey stillness! Above:
fingers of ice run over
our necks and backs.
Pure salt-free taste. A solid
rainwall gushing froth, a surf-floor
everywhere continuous:
cold, density, rage and blindness. . . .
Below: warmth,
airy thinness, ghostly calm.
Crystallinity to all depths: every particle glint-edged,
striated with color; all angles and curves
of minutia insistent to the eye,
disseveral. Allseeingness!
Incandescence! The self—
a luminous subterranean eye—
spreading like sight, radiating
hundreds of feet in all directions from the storm center.

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RICHARD PEVEAR

On the Memoirs of Nadezhda Mandelstam

> The class struggle, which is always present in a historian influenced by Marx, is a fight for the crude and material things without which no refined and spiritual things could exist. Nevertheless, it is not in the form of spoils which fall to the victor that the latter make their presence felt in the class struggle. They manifest themselves in this struggle as courage, humor, cunning, and fortitude. They have retroactive force and will constantly call in question every victory, past and present, of the rulers.
>
> —Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"

I

HOMER WAS THE TEACHER OF THE GREEKS. What does that mean? That for several hundred years, down to the time of the Sophists, and probably long after the Sophists, the Greeks drew their experience of the world and of the past, of themselves and of the question of destiny, from poetry. It is wrong to say that our age represents a technical advance over Greek civilization; it would be truer to say that our age took the path to techniques, which the Greeks were not interested in, and has reached a different end. And then, perhaps the apparent difference between our age and the age taught by Homer is an illusion brought on by our own historical obsessions. Perhaps, as the Greeks thought, time does not alter the condition of being human.

These reflections come to me as I think about the memoirs of Nadezhada Mandelstam—a book with a deceptive appearance. On the surface, it is a book of recollections, by the wife of the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam, of the years of their persecution under Stalin. Looked at in the light of modern literary expression, we can see that it has clear connections with the work of Kafka, Beckett, Brecht, the Russian modernists: it is nightmarish, anti-

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heroic, full of irony. But standing behind these appearances is something more ancient and absolute: the presence of the epic poet. Most memoirs are arranged chronologically, but the memoirs of Nadezhda Mandelstam are structured like the *Iliad.*

The structure of a narrative creates a certain kind of attention in the reader, whether he is aware of it or not. Chronological order is the simplest structure and the most passive. To concentrate the narrative on a single episode increases the scale of the drawing and the intensity of the action, but leaves the episode isolated in time and space. The chronicle and the saga have both left their traces in the *Iliad,* but Homer takes a long step beyond them. The structure of the *Iliad* is a triumph of poetic vision over the levelling succession of time and over the isolation of human experience. The *Iliad* concentrates on the conflict between two men—more particularly, on the conflict within one man—during the space of a few days out of the ninth year of the war at Troy. This brief, single action begins the poem, and its resolution ends the poem. But Homer seeks for variety within unity, he moves freely in time and place, and as he unfolds the story of Achilles and Hector, he draws in other stories, the host of heroes, and most of the events of the ten year siege.

The memoirs of Nadezhda Mandelstam begin with a violent gesture: "After slapping Alexei Tolstoi in the face, M. immediately returned to Moscow." This gesture has a past history; in fact, it is a point of culmination, which in turn initiates the action that unifies the book. The action is not simply the story of Osip Mandelstam's life. Aristotle rightly says, in the *Poetics,* that a story does not achieve unity simply by being about one man. A few days after he slapped Alexei Tolstoi in the face, Mandelstam was arrested for the first time. That was in May of 1934. The book begins with his first arrest, and ends with his death, or with rumors of his death, in a transit camp near Vladivostok, in 1938. The action covers a period of four years. But the book covers a period of over fifty years, from around 1912 to 1964 or later. Nadezhda Mandelstam narrates her story elaborately, in Homeric fashion, digressing, commenting, foreshadowing, drawing in people, events, and stories, with no regard for chronology, but using the associative and comparative methods of Homeric narrative. Her book embodies a single, unified action, but at the

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same time recreates the world, the historical age, in which the action is imbedded.

The final unity of a literary work points back to the original unity of its genesis. Structure and vision are born at the same moment, and what I have been describing as Homeric structure is also a vision, a particular ordering of the world. Homer placed the story of Achilles at the center of his poem, not simply for structural reasons, but because that story is the most essential, the most universal, and the most tragic story of all. Homer is concerned with destiny, not with historical truth. To the eye of destiny it is not the succession of historical events, but the lowest and highest, the moment of greatest intensity, that matters. With the same disdain for historical sequence, Nadezhda Mandelstam places the story of her husband's persecution and death, but also of his revolt and affirmation, at the center of her book: it is in the light of the poet's destiny that the historical age is seen and judged.

All the odds were against this book from the start, and not only political odds. Nadezhda Mandelstam gives us an idea of what she had to overcome in order to write it. In one place she describes it as "an acute sense of being doomed" which "gave rise to an indifference so overwhelming as to be almost physical, like a heavy weight pressing down on the shoulders." It was also the will to silence:

> Later I often wondered whether it is right to scream when you are being beaten and trampled underfoot. Isn't it better to face one's tormentors in a stance of satanic pride, answering them with contemptuous silence? I decided that it is better to scream. This pitiful sound, which sometimes, goodness knows how, reaches into the remotest prison cell, is a concentrated expression of the last vestige of human dignity. It is a man's way of leaving a trace, of telling people how he lived and died. By his screams he asserts his right to live, sends a message to the outside world demanding help and calling for resistance. If nothing else is left, one must scream. Silence is the real crime against humanity.

She writes, she says, to bear witness. But what does it mean to bear witness? Is it any more than to justify the dead to the dead? In this case it is far more. Her book is written for the living, it is intended to instruct, but to instruct by vision, not by explanation. The rarest and most moving quality of her voice, after the life that was inflicted upon her, is the quality of patient instruction.

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There is a passage in Simone Weil's essay on the *Iliad* that perfectly describes the task that Nadezhda Mandelstam faced and the spirit with which she has carried it out:

> . . . nothing is so rare as to see misfortune fairly portrayed; the tendency is either to treat the unfortunate person as though catastrophe were his natural vocation, or to ignore the effects of misfortune on the soul, to assume, that is, that the soul can suffer and remain unmarked by it, can fail, in fact, to be recast in misfortune's image. The Greeks, generally speaking, were endowed with spiritual force which allowed them to avoid self-deception. The rewards of this were great; they discovered how to achieve in all their acts the greatest lucidity, purity, and simplicity.

Lucidity and simplicity are the main characteristics of Nadezhda Mandelstam's style, her writing is controlled and understated, there is not a line of false consolation or self-pity in it. Her voice burns with a bitterness as unanswerable as the bitterness of Achilles, but its fire gives off light. Terror is rightly called blind. Nadezhda Mandelstam triumphs over blind and primitive terror with the poet's gift of lucid vision. She does not attempt to diminish terror or to explain it away with rationalizing arguments; she divests terror of its demonic power by portraying it with unbending truth. To bear witness does not mean to unburden oneself of grief, to denounce or accuse, but to struggle for lucid vision.

This is the poet's domain. No form of discourse, no scientific or historical discipline can lay hold of his living images. The forms of discourse do not embody the living world, they create an ideational second world that is related to the living world as an interpretation of it. Not to report events, but to turn events into experience, to give to events the imprint of the shaping spirit, to make happening into something recognized, something to be shared: that is the end Nadezhda Mandelstam achieves in her book, and the difference between a work of art and a source of information. To transform raw events into experience, is to overcome human isolation—the isolation that was the purpose of Stalin's policies and is the goal of power ("isolate but preserve" was the official name of the treatment Mandelstam received after his first arrest). To overcome human isolation, the poet constructs an image of the world transformed by the light of recognition. Poetry is born of acceptance. It is the opposite of the willful,

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disintegrative theorizing with which men take revenge upon the passing away of time. Nadezhda Mandelstam's vision, like Homer's, is world-building.

There have been many memoirs published in Russia since the death of Stalin—works which bear witness to the years of terror, important documents for social and literary history. Nadezhda Mandelstam's memoir differs from most of them in that it is first of all a work of art. But it is a work of art that does not fit comfortably into the aesthetic notions of our time. And in this, as in other ways, it resembles Pasternak's novel. It is not obviously experimental. It is a single book in an age that is concerned with quantity, production. It speaks with direct and passionate authority. Its most immediate ancestry in Russian literature is perhaps the work of Tolstoy.

There is an observation in Mihajlo Mihajlov's essay, "Russian Modernism," that also calls some of our critical preconceptions into question: "The artist's struggle gives birth to realism and *fabula*. The artist surrenders and modernism is born." I will suggest, briefly, what I think he means.

The modernist doubts the appearance of the world. He also doubts that his images can embody anything that corresponds to an objective reality. In his work, objects have lost their solidity and constancy; they flow out of their customary forms into new and disconcerting appearances. His vision is turned inward, mixed with dreams. And what germ or recollection of story there may be in his work hovers somewhere behind the process and texture of the writing itself, which is his main concern. Modernism is an art of inner tension, and however much the modernist writer may long for concreteness or transcendence, his vision always remains on the verge, dissolving and rebuilding apocryphal worlds. It does not cross over. I would not take Mihajlov's statement as a negative judgment. Modernism has given us some very great works. It has its own truth and its own inner necessity, but it is born of the surrender of the world.

Russian modernism was killed off in the thirties, when the purges established socialist realism as the style corresponding to the age. Socialist realism is rationalized art. Its world is given and conventional. It is a form of neoclassicism, as Andrei Sinyavsky

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has pointed out. The style of socialist realism is collective, it remains the same from one writer to the next. In fact, everything is known before hand for the socialist realist, and the only difficulty he faces is in fitting what is known to the facts of revolutionary history. He knows nothing of the inwardness and self-doubt of the modernists, and he cannot question the appearance of the world because he never looks at it. Socialist realism is the product of official decree.

The literature of nineteenth-century Russia, in contrast to both of these later developments, was at odds with "the age" and fighting for the world. Realism is not a literary movement, it is a moment that comes over literature and can appear at any time. Nadezhda Mandelstam's memoir is rooted in the work of the Russian realists. It bears no trace of modernist subjectivity, it looks to the world: "My fate was the common fate." And: "The work of the poet, as a vehicle of world harmony, has a social character—that is, it is concerned with the doings of the poet's fellow men, among whom he lives and whose fate he shares. He does not speak 'for them,' but with them, nor does he set himself apart from them: otherwise he would not be a source of truth." But at the same time, there is nothing conventional or preconceived in her embodiment of the world. On the contrary, as with the realists, it is precisely the world that is in question, that must be fought for and won in a moment of illumination. Pasternak says that Tolstoy "possessed the faculty of seeing things in the detached finality of each separate moment, in sharp relief, as we see things only on rare occasions, in childhood, or on the crest of an all-embracing happiness, or in the triumph of a great spiritual victory." And he adds: "To see things like that it is necessary that one's eye be directed by passion. For it is passion that by its flash illuminates an object, intensifying its appearance."

This passionate contemplation, the richest current in Russian literature, springs from the experience of human suffering. In the light of human suffering, the problem of the world and its reflection in words is radically qualified: the world is solid, human suffering is real. It is suffering that calls the world in question, and suffering that calls us to the common world. The difficulty is to take the true measure of suffering, to reveal its total desolation, and with the same words, in the same breath, to praise suffering

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and hold to it, beyond all worldly consolations. The moment of this double recognition is the moment of tragic vision. It cannot be planned for, it is the final increment of experience.

II

> Pourtant, l'âge d'or promis ne mériterait ce nom qu'*au présent,* à peine plus. La perspective d'un paradis hilare détruit l'homme.
>
> —René Char

The action that unifies Nadezhda Mandelstam's memoir is the conflict between Mandelstam, the poet, and Stalin, the absolute dictator. At one point she states it clearly, and in generic terms: "Struggling for breath, frightened of everything but afraid of no one, crushed and condemned, the bearded poet thus defied once more, in his last days, the dictator whose power was greater than any the world had ever seen." We must not think that this conflict grew out of conditions peculiar to Stalin's Russia and resolved itself with his death. It happens to have reached a point of violent clarification in Russia, where ideology has been pushed into every corner of life, and where, judging only by the qualities of their work, the poets have been strongest in opposing the total assertions of politics. Their gift to us is the awareness that we ourselves are living through the same struggle, here and now, at the heart of our existence on the earth. As Nadezhda Mandelstam implies, the action of her book, which could not be more concrete and historical, has at the same time a universal content. Mandelstam is not simply a particular man, he is the embodiment of poetry. And Stalin, though he remains in the shadows throughout the narrative, is the embodiment of force, in its assumption of historical fatality and in its militant rationalization of the world.

The struggle between these two men cuts across ideological boundaries. In fact, the disagreements among various political factions obscure what is really at stake. We hear about these disagreements constantly, they have turned all reporting into propaganda, and it is from propaganda that the majority of us draw our experience of the world. But even the largest of these con-

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tests, the one that fills the horizon, the contest between communism and capitalism, is not a true opposition. It is a rivalry between direct and indirect methods of reaching the same end. Communism and capitalism agree on essentials. They share the same ruling assumptions: the belief in the material basis of life and of societies; the belief in progress (history not as the past, which is an object of love, nor as the condition of human existence, but as a process pushing into the future, i.e. determinism); the view of mankind as an inter-identical mass which partakes of a collective destiny; the belief that the truths arrived at by rationalizing reason, which they call science, exert a compelling force upon the mind, and that mechanization (the replacing of all natural processes by mechanical duplications of them) will lead to the triumph of man over nature. For capitalism and communism alike, the present is dissolved in visions of a golden future: the golden future of endless expansion and profiteering, or the golden future of the withering away of the state and the rule of science. They both serve force, matter, and the rationalization of the world.

All of our higher activites are grounded in the authentic life of the people, as Walter Benjamin says with beautiful clarity in the passage I have placed at the head of this essay. There can be nothing refined or spiritual that is not rooted in the ground of daily existence. Andrei Sinyavsky describes authentic daily life in one of his short essays. He speaks of

> the way of life of the peasant, who never travelled farther than the hay-mowing and passed all his life in traditional, self-made bast shoes. In scope his experience seems narrow to us, but how great in reality was the size of it, although it was compressed and squeezed into one village. Why even the monotonous ritual of dinner . . . led one into the realm of understanding a universal reality. Observing the fasts and holidays, man lived by a universally historical calendar which began with Adam and ended with the Terrible Judgment. For that reason, by the way, some semi-civilized sect follower could from time to time philosophize in no way worse than Tolstoy and attain the level of the Carpenter having no tools in his hands save the Bible. The peasant maintained an unceasing tie with the whole enormous edifice of the world, and he came to his end in the depths of eternity together with Abraham.

The problem with reasoning from the material base is that such reasoning fails to ask what the material base is grounded in. It is

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grounded in "an unceasing tie with the whole enormous edifice of the world." However, Marx was not concerned with the peasant, he was concerned with the proletarian. And the proletarian is no longer an authentic man, he is an uprooted man. Marx was outraged by capitalism because capitalism creates the proletarian, a man alienated from authentic life. But Russian communism, rising against capitalism, did not put an end to the creation of a proletariat, it proletarianized the whole of life. Communism is more direct in its methods and clearer in in its ideology that capitalism, with its lingering malaise and its air of lost connections. But to the eye of destiny, they are interchangeable.

The world that Nadezhda Mandelstam portrays is not the product of communism, it is the product of rationalized force. The paradox is that rationalized force leads to an irrational world—to a primitive, ungovernable, and finally impossible world. When rationalized force assumes total authority, it makes excessive demands upon existence; it demands that existence conform itself to a projected, rational development; it reduces the enormous edifice of the world to its own measure. Rationalized force lays claim to the earth as a vast source of energy, and at the same time it strips the living man of his personal destiny and turns him into the prime resource for its operations. It has occasionally been recognized that these operations enslave men instead of serving their needs, that they make integral man into a super-animal whose only prospect is an endless material fabrication, into a true primitive, submitted without recourse to powers beyond his control or understanding, in comparison with whom the cave painters of Lascaux reveal a baffling richness of spirit. But it must also be recognized that the ideal of total rationalization has never been reached.

The real opposition does not need to be called for, it already exists. It appears, as it always has, in the very struggle against the depredations of force. The laws of nature have always caused men suffering, at times the universe itself has seemed to oppose us. And today men have joined their own will to these impersonal forces to increase the sum total of affliction. But men have always struggled against force by means of an enigmatic gift: the integral vision of poetry, the gift of praise. Simone Weil has written: "Beauty is the only aspect under which earthly existence can be loved."

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Nadezhda Mandelstam is a highly conscious and controlled writer, but no amount of consciousness and control could, alone, have produced this book. To achieve lucidity one must possess an inner attentiveness that has little connection with conscious will, but is a spiritual force which may even work counter to the will in bringing its vision to light. In Nadezhda Mandelstam, the two forces happen to be in harmony. In other writers they have been in conflict. Thus Bertolt Brecht conceived of his play, *Mother Courage,* as an orthodox Marxist work, but what he wrote was a tragic drama that breaks down all orthodoxies. In it the conflict between rationalization and poetry, which Brecht carried within himself, is fully revealed.

Is Mother Courage a capitalist, an example of private enterprise, as Brecht claims she is? Is she not rather a historical materialist? At any rate, she is a rationalist. What made her a rationalist was a prior experience which she herself calls the Great Capitulation. It is the realization that ordinary people are interchangeable in the face of necessity, that they are caught up in events which involve them without exalting them and destroy them without remembering them. She has seen through the deceptions of church and state, she knows that "war is a business proposition," and that religion, politics, and business are all the same thing. She is preoccupied with her own insight. She propagandizes for capitulation, and her reasoning is quick and clever, the reasoning of a rationalist, all on one level, directed to a single end: "All I want is to bring me and my children through in this wagon." Hers is an ideology of survival, and like all ideologies, it fixes upon the future. Survival is the one condition Courage makes with the world.

Her analysis of the human situation has Marxist characteristics: she sees that all superstructures have an economic base, that truth is relative to historical circumstances, social institutions, and the motives of the leaders. Corruption within the church is corruption of Christianity, corruption within the state is corruption of politics. Beyond, or above, these institutions there is nothing; if one attempts to see beyond, one sees only the desolate, god-forsaken earth.

The great capitulation is the loss of poetry; but loss of poetry is loss of sight, loss of the concrete present. The great capitulation

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is the surrender of the living world for the sake of a projected future of survival. But events continue to unfold in the present, the abandoned world, and by the end of the play, all of Courage's children are dead.

What force of spirit would enable us to contemplate the godforsaken earth without turning aside? For Mother Courage it is not force of spirit but exhaustion of will that momentarily restores her sight. This occurs in the ninth scene of the play:

> COURAGE (to COOK): Lamb, I'm tired of wandering too. I feel like a butcher's dog taking meat to my customers and getting none myself. I have nothing more to sell, and people have nothing to buy my nothing with. In Saxony a man in rags tried to force a chest full of books on me in return for two eggs, and in Würtemberg they would have left me their plough for a bag of salt. Why plough? Nothing grows anymore, but thornbushes. In Pomerania the villagers have been eating their younger children, nuns have been caught committing robbery.
>
> COOK: The world's dying out.
>
> COURAGE: Sometimes I see myself driving through hell in my wagon, selling brimstone, or else driving through heaven, handing out provisions to wandering souls. If only me and my children, what's left of them, could find a place where there's no shooting, I might get in a couple of quiet years.

There is nowhere else that Courage speaks like this. For a moment the relentless concentration on the future drops away from her. The present bursts into the play in a series of apocalyptic images. What we hear is no longer argument, it is poetry: the voice of a desolate world, of exposed humanity. Would a change of economic systems help this world? It doesn't need to be changed, it needs to be saved. (The scene is set in front of a half-ruined parsonage. The photographs of Brecht's own productions show a dimly lighted crucifix at the back. The technique of montage is at the service of vision; it is poetic, not argumentative in nature.) Mother Courage sees, briefly, but seeing changes nothing, her outcry brings no divine response. This moment is left suspended in the middle of the play.

The voice of human suffering speaks out of living mouths. In our time it has been all but drowned out by the voice of history, which speaks commandingly out of the future. But there is no transcendence in the future, only the present can be transcendent.

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War, like revolution, and like material production, sacrifices the present to the future: victory lies in the future, bloodshed in the present. But the sacrifice of the present is not a momentary necessity, it is the essential mode that force adopts in its operations upon the world. In the future there will again be a living present to be sacrificed to a new future. "If you want a picture of the future," George Orwell wrote, "imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever."

What good did the sacrifice of so many lives under Stalin do? What purpose did the killing serve? (Because rationalization always demands a reason for its madness.) At the Twentieth Party Congress the purpose of Stalin's terror was annulled, the dead were "rehabilitated."

Brecht courted Marxism, but he could not silence the voice of life within him. *Mother Courage* is far more than a clever syllogism connecting business and war. The play presents a powerful argument against the surrender of the world to matter and force, whatever the reigning ideology may be. Brecht's vision is tragic because it carries the contradictions of human existence to the unbearable limits and cries out for supernatural justification.

Integral poetic vision is rooted in the present which transcends time and touches eternity. The intersection of earthly existence with eternity is a single point which can only be present because the present alone is living. "Since he works with words, the poet's lips are the tool of his trade." Nadezhda Mandelstam bases some uncommonly wise remarks about the art of poetry on this observation. Poetry makes language physical, makes it a gesture; it draws together the physical and the spiritual in a way that is beyond the grasp of any ideology. Poetry is the awakened image of the present. It shakes us out of the sleep in which we plan, prepare, and calculate for the future. That is how poetry is opposed to the rationalization of the world.

Poetry is the language of freedom, because freedom is given at the point of intersection between the present and eternity—and this is true whether or not we are aware of it, whether or not we believe in eternity. On the other hand, all slavery is to time. Men are punished with sentences of time, that is, they are cut off from the present. Labor is paid by the hour. The Five Year Plan is a

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measure of time. And self-slavery, or capitulation, is also slavery to time. We acquiesce to force, we betray our friends, our fellow artists, we surrender everything worth dying for, in order to continue in our wretched existence—wretched because it is a slave's existence. Freedom can belong only to the man or woman who has the courage to renounce the future for the sake of the present. The renunciation of the future for the sake of the present is not subject to rational justification.

Poetry is the language of freedom. Therefore, when the state becomes tyrannical, it is a crime to be a poet. The largeness of poetic consciousness is incompatible with the narrow-mindedness that is always a mark of evil. Mandelstam called himself the last Christian-Hellenic poet of Russia. He was hounded to his death; his works are still unpublished in his native country. In its narrow-mindedness, evil likes to adopt a self-righteous vocabulary, a rhetoric heavy with historical purposefulness. In this context we might listen to Pasternak's comments on *King Lear:* "Only the criminals in *King Lear* wield the notions of duty and honor; they alone are sensible and eloquent, and logic and reason assist them in their frauds, cruelties, and murders." On the other hand, listen to the voice of Mandelstam:

> Preserve my words forever for their aftertaste of misfortune and smoke,
> for their tar of collective patience and conscientious work—
> water in the wells of Novgorod must be black and sweetened
> to reflect a star with seven fins at Christmas.
>
> Oh my fatherland, my friend, my rough helper,
> remember your unrecognized brother, the apostate from the people's family. . . .

What will remain of the terrors of totalitarian politics which have bloodied every year of our century? Evil disappears; the works of evil sink back into the unformed matter that was their only source—a one-sided creation, incapable of standing in the light. Evil leaves its mark only in a richer music, a renewed strength of vision in poetry. Poetry alone remains because poetry alone is established. As Heidegger has said, "Language is the house of being." Poetry lives, not because it shrewedly lays claim

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to the future, but because it seeks for the living moment which halts the flow of time, erases the distances between men, and erects over the flux of existence the architecture of the abiding present.

"Poetry," Nadezhda Mandelstam writes, "is a law to itself; it is impossible to bury it alive and even a powerful propaganda machinery such as ours cannot prevent it from living on. 'I am easy in my mind now,' Akhmatova said to me in the sixties. 'We have seen how durable poetry is.' "

And years earlier, in the thirties, Osip Mandelstam wrote:

> Depriving me of sea, of space to run and space to fly,
> And giving my footsteps the brace of a forced land,
> What have you gained? The calculation dazzles,
> But you cannot seize the movement of my lips, their
> silent sound.[1]

[1] Poems of Mandelstam adapted respectively by Robert Lowell and Rose Styron, from *Poets on Streetcorners*, edited by Olga Carlisle (Random House, 1968).

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DANIEL HOFFMAN

The Princess Casamassima

After digging in the rubble of the ruined house
For nine days
They've found a *third* corpse—
No fingerprints; no hands.
One leg and the head blown off.
The story in the *Times*
Didn't even tell
The sex of the torso . . .

These were some of the people
Who'd take power to the people
Into their own hands.
All their questions have one answer.
Dynamite
Makes non-negotiable demands
For an apocalypse
In the case of survivors.

Once, another world ago,
There was a girl I never dreamed
Would be like them:
She seemed to lack nothing
—Looks, friends, certainly a silver
Spoon had stirred her porringer—
She'd sit scribbling
Notes in the next to the back row,

But I can't remember now
One word she wrote for me.
—Good God,
Was it something *I* said
About Thoreau
Shorted her fuse?
Surely, such unbalanced, mad
Action is extracurricular . . .

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If the discourse of our liberal arts
Which entertains all rival truths as friends
And rival visions reconciles
Could but bring the pleasures of its wholeness
To a mind
Rent by frenzy—
But how conceive what hatred
Of the self, turned inside-out, reviles

The whole great beckoning world, or what desire
Sentenced the soul
To that dark cellar where all life became
So foul
With the pitch of rage,
Rage, rage, rage to set aflame
Father's house—What can assuage
That fire or that misfire?

Vows

I meet him in the spaces
Between the half-familiar places
Where I've been,
It's when I'm struggling toward the door
Of the flooded cellar
Up to my crotch in my father's ruined account books
—There, like an oyster cracker
Floats my mother's Spode tureen
(The one they sold at auction
When the market was down)—

Then just outside
Before I'm in the trooptrain on the siding
Spending the vivid years
Of adolescence and the war

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With dented messkit in hand
Always at the end
Of a frozen chowline
Of unappeased hungers,
He appears—

Listen, kid,
Why do you bug me with your reproachful
Silent gaze—
What have I ever
Done to you but betray you?
To which he says
Nothing.

Listen, I'd forget if I could
Those plans you made
To staunch the blood
Of the soul that spread
Its cry for peace across the unjust sky,
I wouldn't give it a thought if I

Could just manage to not
Remember your vows
To plunge into the heat
Of the heart and fuse
With the passionate Word
All thought,
All art—

Come, let's go together
Into the blazing
House with its gaping door.
The windows are all alight
With the color of my deeds,
My omissions.
It's our life that's burning.
Is it ever too late to thrust
Ourselves into the ruins,
Into the tempering flames?

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PHILIP LEVINE

A Hand Wrote That

Beside a dry creek
the rushes howl in the first
loosening of wind, the small valleys
of our living overflow
with darkness. This is not night
or day or anything to do
with that, this is
where the shivering stops.

The light will come again
unaccountably from
the dead thumbs of radishes, rising
ghostlike from the crowns
of onions. The closed fist
of stone will waken and gallop
into the foothills. John
Lawrence Simpson is dead.
A hand wrote that.

For Luis Omar Salinas, Poet of La Raza

Sinks whispering in the cold, pinball
machines that sweat,
sacks of memorial letters
crying for help. The world is born
over and over in the bleeding
chemistry of your eyes. At dusk
the blue water rising from
the olive trees, it burns like an old scar

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or a fresh tattoo. You say, Shit,
and wonder what it's good for
and why the trucks
never stop and a storm waits on the way
to anywhere.
The drive-ins are
shrouded in mist, the stars
coming apart, and nothing waits inside
the halos of sleep. Tonight
you're sober, Luis, in America
where no one can tell, and your earthen
hands glow with the imprints
of hell, and it's all you, your soul
battered like your teeth, the silence,
the blessings, the road, the poor promises
your mother never meant.

Angel 14

He passes into the streets in a business suit,
he crosses at the corner where the children wait
on their way to the fenced yards and the dark barns.

The first snow falls dusting the raw faces
of the oak stumps, the first snow thickens like paste
between the slender fingers of the raccoon.

He lies face down on a rumpled bed and feels
creation ticking in his heart, ticking in his bowels,
he feels the blood and its rushing into black stones.

It's afternoon and once more the light is failing.
I won't serve, he says. His eyes are cups
that hold fists, hair pins, bombers,

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the lost tooth a girl wrapped in cloth,
the old problems without solutions, the yellowing
pages read and reread, the circle drawn in dirt.

The muscles knot between my ribs, I carry an axe
and cut nothing, looking for dust I pour out milk.
Silver filings collect under fingernails,

nailed to the iron pond the egret eats its wings,
a child turns suddenly and crashes through glass,
and passes into the streets in a business suit.

VINCENT STEWART

One of the Seven Sleepers Awakening

Blink, sun. There is too much light
for a day so cold.
As I look beyond the lip
of the cave, the flow

of the wind shows in the trees,
in the tufts of pine
which swing in their smooth rhythms
against the cliff-side.

The day was warm when I came;
the smell of cut grass
and of freshly-budded limbs
was nothing like this:

this tart odor of frosting resin,
this over-bright and this heatless sun.

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IRVING SINGER

Molière's Dom Juan

"In order for a Don Juan to be possible," Stendhal says in *Les Cenci,* "there must be hypocrisy in society." He is thinking primarily of Molière's Dom Juan, for Mozart's Don Giovanni he finds closer to nature, less concerned about the opinions of others, and less bemused by a corrupt model of male sexuality established at the court. A Don Juan such as Molière's, Stendhal tells us, would have been in antiquity an effect without a cause:

> Religion was festive, it exhorted men to seek pleasure; how could it have castigated people who make a certain pleasure their total preoccupation? . . . . I do not think that the Athenian Don Juan would have ended in crime as quickly as the Don Juan of a modern monarchy. A large part of the latter's pleasure consists in challenging public opinion, and he makes a beginning, in his youth, by imagining that he is only challenging hypocrisy.

To many critics it will seem strange to consider Molière's Dom Juan as one who challenges hypocrisy. In the last act he tells Sganarelle that he has decided to become a hypocrite himself and then we see him behave like one; in the first act he had already parried Elvire's sanctimonious attack with a cynical profession of piety that makes him sound distinctly hypocritical; and in scenes with the peasant girls and the hermit his air of simple, eye-ball sincerity is so artificial that one may well interpret it as mere hypocrisy. How, then, can this character *challenge* hypocrisy? Is he not a Tartuffe whose dogma is sex, and therefore a villain of the same order as Taruffe himself?

I do not think so. For one cannot decide to be a Tartuffe. His kind of hypocrite deludes *himself* in the process of deluding everyone else. He feigns so deeply that he believes the lie he fabricates for others. Tartuffe is interesting precisely because he has been infected by his own pretenses. When he finally dismisses Orgon with the words "this house belongs to me," he speaks with unmediated conviction, with rectitude and a sense of legitimacy that his moral disease has artfully produced in him. In arguing for the religious wager, Pascal had encouraged men to act devoutly

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even though they had no devotional feelings. The behavior alone would stupefy their sceptical beliefs—*"cela vous fait croire et vous abêtira."* In Tartuffe we see the consequences of such stupefaction. His religious activities possess him completely and he no longer realizes that he lacks the requisite feelings or beliefs.

Dom Juan may also be corrupt, but in different ways. He is never fooled by the mask he wears. He merely misconstrues the implications of wearing one. Tartuffe *is* what he condemns; and through bad faith he uses condemnation as a means of protecting himself. He projects the super-ego outwards in just those areas where his own impulses are liable to attack. Dom Juan, however, defines himself *against* the authority of the established super-ego. If he speaks in its voice, the mode is always irony: he assumes the role for the sake of undermining its power and reviling its pomposity. He plays at being a hypocrite just as he plays at being amorous. Each is a technique—in his case unsuccessful—for liberating oneself from an inherited morality that others hypocritically accept. His playfulness is thus an implied assault upon Tartuffe, a mimicry that condemns the condemnor, rather than a continuation of his being. At the very end Dom Juan brings his destruction upon himself by defiantly shouting: "No, no, it will not be said—come what may—that I am capable of repenting." These are the words of a defeated revolutionary; they are not the words of a Tartuffe.

Dom Juan was attacked by the same religious extremists who had previously attacked *Tartuffe*; and they finally succeeded in having both plays withdrawn. In his Preface to the 1669 edition of *Tartuffe*, Molière defended himself by arguing that religion was not the issue but only his attempt to distinguish between the hypocrite and the truly devout man. As for his method, he says: "The best way of attacking vice is to expose it to general laughter. People can easily put up with rebukes but they cannot bear ridicule. They are quite willing to be wicked but they do not want to appear ridiculous." Now, Dom Juan is often rebuked in the play; and he is certainly prepared to be wicked in the eyes of the world. But he is never ridiculous. *Tartuffe* shocked so many of Molière's contemporaries because it reminded them that virtuous appearances are always liable to ridicule. And since no one can be sure that his own morality is real and not merely apparent, we laugh at Tartuffe as a way of assuming a virtue though

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we have it not. But we do not laugh at Dom Juan. On the contrary, he seduces us into laughing at the other characters in the play. He subjects almost every one of them to just that moral ridicule on which Molière prides himself. In each encounter, he turns the comedy to his own advantage. Even with the Statue, he remains the commanding figure. Though now the laugh is on him, in the sense that he suffers retributively, he astounds us with his unremitting courage. If one assumes that Molière was attacking vice in this play as he was in *Tartuffe*, either the vice must be of a different sort—since he handles the protagonist so differently—or else it must be the same but directed towards different characters.

Both alternatives are true. The play—which everyone admits to be a very difficult one—achieves its unique ambiguity by using Dom Juan to reveal the hypocrisy of everyone else at the same time as they show him to be the monster that he is. The structure appears in virtually every scene, but I can show it most easily in the beginning of the third act. Dom Juan and Sganarelle are discussing the nature of man. Disguised as a doctor in order to escape from pursuers, Sganarelle carries on about medicine and faith as if he were indeed a knowing person. But he is only a fool and his words keep tripping him up. After garbling the theological argument from design, he concludes that there is "something wonderful in man." For he can move with intelligence: "go to the right or the left, forwards or backwards, turn round." Then he tumbles over, and Dom Juan can point out that his argument falls to the ground. This is vaudeville for the Age of Reason, but it has a dramatic function. In all these pratfalls of the intellect, Dom Juan remains cool, straight, and precise while Sganarelle appears ridiculous in the manner of a hypocrite. He pretends to a clarity of understanding which he does not have, and he condemns Dom Juan for exactly his own kind of confusion. When Dom Juan says he believes only that two and two make four and that two fours are eight, Sganarelle concludes that his religion is arithmetic. He cannot see that Dom Juan is ridiculing Sganarelle's own pretentiousness. For Sganarelle, like all those in the play who think they have divined the wonderful in man, adds two and two and gets infinity. That is why they are hypocrites: they cannot accept the elementary truths about themselves as human beings without inflating them into some ideal quantity. Dom Juan

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does not offer any opinions about man or the universe. He does not try to explain the nature of anything. He merely points out that those who deny the reality of things as they are (two plus two equaling four) fall on their face. His religion is not arithmetic, but the simple elegance in arithmetic alerts us to what is false in religion.

At this point, *le Pauvre* enters; and quite appropriately. In the original cast, he was listed as *Francisque;* and we may well take him to be a Franciscan hermit. Sganarelle and Dom Juan are lost in the mysteries of life about which they have been discoursing, somewhat like Dante in the forest. They turn to the hermit as a holy man who lives in the solitude of these woods. He knows nothing about disputation, only about charity and prayer. He is to give them directions, show the road to take, the path to town. And in a sense, he does. But not because of anything he professes, not because he has Christian charity, or because his prayers are worth anything. He points the way by standing up to Dom Juan and refusing to blaspheme. Preferring to starve if necessary, he retains his integrity. Otherwise, he is as much of a hypocrite as everyone else. From the two and two of people coming to him for help, he pretends to get more than four by the sacramental fraud he calls prayer. For if he derives an income from acts of charity, his love cannot be disinterested and Dom Juan is wholly justified in jeering at it. As long as the hermit prays to God as a calculated means of earning rewards, his conduct is itself implicit blasphemy. By offering him money to say terrible things, Dom Juan is paying to see the truth made manifest. He wants the holy man to acknowledge the lie within his soul. The hermit will not do this, but the lie remains.

Immediately after this scene, Dom Juan gallantly risks his life to save the man who was being attacked by three others. Sganarelle thinks he must be mad to rush into danger when he could as easily have avoided it. But in Sganarelle we have already encountered that split between words and deeds to which Dom Juan is so sharply attuned. Although he has claimed the highest of religious scruples, Sganarelle found no difficulty in egging on the hermit, encouraging him to blaspheme for the sake of money. What Dom Juan does for his fellow man reveals the emptiness of what Sganarelle and the hermit both have been saying, but only saying, about charity. For he acts in a way that is completely

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disinterested: he helps one who ought to be helped and he asks for no reward. Having professed neither religious nor moral motives, he has nevertheless acted properly. He does the right thing at the right time.

But just as the holy man is a hypocrite, so too is Dom Juan a monster. It is not a question of his being sadistic with the hermit, as some critics have maintained. He tempts him as a way of testing his faith, and he generously recognizes his ability to pass the test. No, Dom Juan is a monster for other reasons. He says that he gives the hermit money out of a love for humanity, *"pour l'amour de l'humanité";* and these words are easily linked to a humanitarian faith of the eighteenth or nineteenth century. But they are said without feeling, for Dom Juan is a man who has no moral feelings even when he does the right thing. The words he uses contrast with the orthodox formula for alms-giving—*pour l'amour de Dieu*—but they do not imply a comparable sentiment. Dom Juan rewards the hermit for his courage in the face of temptation. But he does not care about him or in any way concern himself with his condition. He is merely making two plus two equal four. The hermit has earned a recompense and so he is given money. As a fellow human being, he does not exist for Dom Juan. The money is an object that reduces the beggar to the status of an object, a component within Dom Juan's personal equation. He is not treated as a person and he does not receive love, either the love of God or humanity. Similarly, the outnumbered man earns Dom Juan's help just in being outnumbered. Action is required by the disproportion of the odds, and later Dom Juan insists that the rules of honor *forced* him to intervene. It is clear that he did not do so because of any concern for a human being as such.

Throughout the play Dom Juan dominates the stage as one who is integral, true to himself, the person he has chosen to be. From beginning to end he remains the conquering male who will not swerve from his own self-definition. In defining himself without feeling and without love, however, he has "chosen to be nothing"—as Camus says. For Camus this makes him into a hero of the absurd, a man who has "knowledge without illusions," one who realizes that what we call love is really just a brief admixture of desire, affection, and intellect. But Camus idealizes Dom Juan, and one may also see him as a schizoid character who cannot love because he cannot feel for other people. Far from

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making him heroic, this merely disqualifies him from human intercourse that is emotionally rewarding. His exploits with women are therefore all a sham. He attracts them in the assumption that he is a man like other men—one who can satisfy and be satisfied —whereas he is only the outer trappings of one. He is a hollow replica, like the Statue itself. When Dom Juan offers the Statue a torch, it replies: "There is no need for light when heaven shows the way." The way that heaven shows—even to one alienated from the religious tradition, as Molière was—is the way of sympathetic feeling. Dom Juan has only the light of intelligence, wit, and justified ridicule. This is a great deal. At the end, when he refuses to be frightened by the Spectre or the Statue or anything else he cannot understand, he almost becomes a tragic figure like Oedipus or Dr. Faustus. But from the start we know that the death of Dom Juan will not, cannot, express the pity and the terror of man's estate. For he lacks that fundamental humanity without which life is not worth living, and without which there cannot be those standards of value that underlie all tragedies.

In his youth Molière studied with free-thinking philosophers like Gassendi, and one could very well argue that his Dom Juan represents both the strength and the weakness of the libertine movement. In searching for authenticity, Dom Juan remains faithful to empirical data about the nature of man. But in failing to use the data for a life worth living, he is just another of those *"faux libertins"* whom Molière condemns in various places. If now we take Sganarelle and all the others as instances of that false devotion which Molière attacked in *Tartuffe*, the pattern becomes clear. Neither alternative is acceptable, and that is why every character in *Dom Juan* seems either incomplete or offensive as a human being. The drama enables each extreme to destroy the other. The outcome is not either/or, but neither/nor. Since no one speaks for Molière in this work, his voice is in the ricochet itself—the concerted conflict and the negative interplay between undesirable ways of life.

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But what exactly is Dom Juan's way of life? Kierkegaard denies it is truly sensuous. In defending his notion that only Mozart's opera embodies the myth, Kierkegaard argues that the sensuous

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requires music as its proper mode of expression. For in music as in the immediacy of sense experience, our enjoyment comes and goes from moment to moment. In both it is a function of duration itself, of time moving from past to future. In Molière's play, however, music has no central importance. And therefore Kierkegaard concludes that Dom Juan cannot be what he calls an "immediate given" but only an entity of reflection. As one who thinks and reasons, Dom Juan cannot represent sensuous existence with the aesthetic rightness of Mozart's Don Giovanni.

There is something in this idea of Kierkegaard. I do believe that the differences between musical drama and drama without music account for the fact that Don Giovanni always fascinates and delights us, although he is inherently less likeable than Molière's character, whereas with Dom Juan we find ourselves watching him at a distance while he fascinates other people. In this sense, Don Giovanni is certainly more immediate and more sensuous thanks to the musical medium, and Dom Juan is more discursive or reflective. But since the myth involves much more than sensuousness alone, I see no reason to prefer one or another mode of expression. Molière's play cannot provide the sense of time passing and therefore it can hardly show us the male arrow in sensuous flight. But neither can Mozart's opera reveal the glories of simultaneous promiscuity. It can hardly show us the male as he manipulates different women *at the same time.* There is nothing in Mozart to compare with the scene in which Dom Juan pirouettes about Charlotte and Mathurine, convincing each in turn that he loves only her and that the other is crazy to think that she will be his bride. Don Giovanni attempts something of the sort when he whispers to Donna Anna and Don Ottavio that Elvira is mad at the same time as he tries to quiet her in their presence. But oddly enough, time here works against the operatic device inasmuch as everyone sings at once, at the same time, with the result that there is no room in our imagination for those *spatial* movements that the scene dramatically requires. Molière succeeds where Mozart fails because he can have Dom Juan turn and even walk from one girl to the other, thereby moving our attention back and forth across the stage. This would be difficult for any musical drama, but it is easy for pantomine or ballet. And indeed if Don Giovanni has his being in music, so too does Dom Juan live in the realm of dance. He is the lightfoot lover who turns

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erotic experience into a ballet-comedy, displacing himself from woman to woman, darting towards them and then away with grace and massive cunning, himself a magnet that attracts and eventually repels. Kierkegaard is wrong: the seductive male can do more than cut a passage in time. He can also conquer space, juggle with the female, and use the art of reflection—itself a balance of ideas—for the sake of expressing masculine sexuality.

That Molière understood all this is clear from his characterization of Dom Juan. At the end of the famous *apologia pro vita sua,* the protagonist says: "There is nothing as sweet as vanquishing the resistance of a beautiful woman; and in matters of beauty I have the ambition of all the great conquerors, who perpetually crave victory after victory, and cannot be satisfied with limiting their aspiration. Nothing can restrain the impetuosity of my desires. I have a heart that could love the entire world, and like Alexander still wish for new worlds through which I might extend my amorous conquests." To the seventeenth century, this ideal would not appear wholly commendable: for Alexander symbolized the marauding tyrant, the merciless invader. But also it was an age of geographical exploration, the discovery of unknown lands that would presumably benefit from conquest. Moreover, Dom Juan uses the spatial metaphors for peaceful rather than warlike ends. It is only the female that he wishes to invade, only beauty that he wants to conquer, and only the world as a libidinal abstraction that he impetuously desires.

In its form, the drama is itself restless and always on the move. Molière constructs the play in defiance of the classical unities of space. Tirso's Seville he transplants to Sicily, and to a palace which Dom Juan seems to be visiting for no reason that anyone can determine. Quite by chance, Elvire turns up in the same place, searching for Dom Juan but having no idea that he is there. Next we are in some nameless countryside, by the shores of the sea. As Dom Juan flees, we enter a forest peopled by brigands and the hermit and visited by Elvire's avenging brothers. Nearby there just happens to be a mausoleum dedicated to the Commandeur whom Dom Juan killed some time back. Finally we end up in Dom Juan's rooms, located nowhere in particular. There he receives—among other guests—a spectre that he attacks with his sword only to learn that it occupies no space but is merely thin air. He then encounters the very opposite, an all-too-solid statue

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which drags him to that undiscovered country from which no traveler returns. As Dom Juan says in his *apologia: "Tout le plaisir de l'amour est dans le changement."*

In playing with the dimensions of space, and in general what Descartes calls extension, Molière follows the methods of ballet throughout. The scene with Charlotte and Mathurine is uniquely successful in representing Dom Juan's cleverness with large numbers of women by showing him dance his way through difficulties with two at once. But all the other scenes have a choreography of their own. Dom Juan runs circles about Sganarelle, whose lack of verbal agility quickly issues into a series of faux pas. He spars and boxes with the awkward Pierrot, fences with the brigands, and joins hands with the Statue in that phony wrestling match. With Monsieur Dimanche, the creditor he beguiles by a show of friendliness, he dances a cozening two-step that culminates when he embraces the startled fellow. Sganarelle then pushes M. Dimanche off stage. In the scene with his father, Dom Luis, Dom Juan listens to the old man's sermonizing in silence and can only think in spatial terms: "Sir, if you were to sit down, you would be in a better position to talk." After Elvire's final plea, he wonders about her trip home and whether she will stay the night in his house. Coming immediately after his minuet with M. Dimanche, the scenes with Elvire and Dom Luis show Dom Juan as one who can stand quietly while his partner performs a solo. His silence supports them as he saves his breath for the intricate steps of the last act.

But it is ultimately as a juggler that one must envisage Dom Juan, both in his art and in his disability. For he dances about the others in the play as if they were objects to be manipulated. As long as they are kept in orbit about himself, returning and departing in a rhythm established by his own desires, he feels he has succeeded in his human relations. He fails because a person cannot be reduced to a thing, even though he may act like one. The hermit refuses to turn himself into the piece of money that Dom Juan offers him; but the others mechanically fall into roles that enable Dom Juan to treat them as one or another kind of object. The peasant girls obviously like the idea of being *objets d'art,* porcelain dolls to be admired for their well-turned figures. Elvire begs Dom Juan to deceive her with excuses about his departure so that she can more easily stereotype herself as one

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"seduced and abandoned." In his perversity, he will not treat her as that kind of object. Instead, he pretends to have left her for religious reasons, having come to realize that their marriage was only a "disguised adultery." This move forces Elvire into a posture Dom Juan finds easier to control, but also it defines her as precisely the object of conventional religion that suits her best. In her later scene she plays the role to perfection, and possibly that is why Dom Juan finds his sexual interest in her returning after all. He has juggled her with success: by all appearances he has made her into the thing she always wanted to be.

Something similar happens to Dom Luis. He enters on the heels of Monsieur Dimanche as if he were the moral creditor of his son, and he lectures him with all the pomposity of a public monument—preparing us for the Statue, who appears shortly afterwards. Perhaps that is why Dom Luis will not sit down. If he did, would it not be harder to define himself as "an authority"? Standing and speaking like the tables of the law, he insists on being taken as an agency of impersonal retribution. "I shall find means," he says, "of anticipating the wrath of heaven. . . ." The Statue of the Commandeur serves to realize this intention. But by invoking him as he does, Dom Luis has been seduced by Dom Juan's juggling act into becoming rigid and stony-hearted himself, the opposite of what it is to be a person. Dom Juan has not turned him into a thing, that being impossible. Yet he has contrived for him to act like one—as he also facilitated the process by which the living Commandeur becomes a deadly statue. And perhaps *that* is why Dom Juan must be destroyed: this awesome power that he has necessitates his ending up in hell. Hell is death-in-life, and death turns all persons into things. Hell is not other people, as Sartre thought, but only their petrifaction. Having no love of persons, Dom Juan is in his element there. He is damned by nothing but his own technology.

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Before I acquiesce in the damnation of Dom Juan, however, I would like to understand the nature of his lovelessness. Kierkegaard dismisses him as "a bully, an ordinary rake." In preferring Mozart to Molière, Kierkegaard argues that Don Giovanni

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is male sexuality absolutely victorious because he delights in the passing moment and seduces spontaneously. Dom Juan has to calculate each act; ultimately he cares only about intrigue: "The musical Don Juan enjoys the satisfaction of desire; the reflective Don Juan enjoys the deception, enjoys the cunning. The immediate enjoyment is over, and a greater enjoyment is found in contemplating the enjoyment." What Kierkegaard says is true insofar as Don Giovanni never thinks. Except for that brief reference to his *"buon natural,"* he makes no effort to justify his existence. Though he embodies the principle of freedom, he never enunciates it. He is frivolous throughout—*essentially* frivolous. Compared to him, Dom Juan is serious even in his playfulness. It is as if Dom Juan had a mission in life. Indeed he tells us what it is: a dedication to beauty. Dom Juan makes love to women because he admires beautiful things and he knows that women will not allow him to enjoy their beauty unless they think he does so for reasons of love.

Only a reflective being could act this way, and surely Kierkegaard is right to say that his outlook is fundamentally deceptive. But Kierkegaard is wrong to assume that Dom Juan enjoys *nothing but* the deception. He clearly delights in Charlotte while she is there before him. And one can imagine him finding something to enjoy in all of the women he seduces. He does not *love* them, but we have every reason to believe that he enjoys the sensuous pleasures that come from making love to them. In his *apologia*, he says:

> Beauty delights me wherever I find it, and I easily give myself to that sweet constraint to which it leads us. Whatever my obligations, the love I bear towards one person cannot make me do injustice to the others. I keep my eyes open to the beauties of them all, and pay to each the homage and the tribute that nature demands of us. Come what may, I cannot refuse my heart to anything I see which is lovable. . . .

The lovable is for Dom Juan identical with the beautiful, and in eliciting his erotic response it may well encompass a delicacy of perception that Don Giovanni could never approximate. Mozart's hero is too busy, too volatile, too active in his amorous trickery, to stand and contemplate the beautiful object he pursues. For Dom Juan, as for Plato, the contemplation becomes an ideal that surpasses all others and justifies any noble lie to which one is forced.

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At the same time, it would be a mistake to think of Dom Juan as a Platonizing philosopher. He may love beautiful things, but he has no conception of beauty as such. He inhabits one of the lower rungs on that ladder which Plato describes in *The Symposium*. He has liberated himself from the fixation upon a particular person, he has come to appreciate the sensuous beauty in all women, and possibly the beautiful in all physical objects. But he misses the beauties that lie beyond superficial appearance. Plato would say that he—like Alcibiades—cannot perceive the beauty of man's soul or of human institutions, and that they both fail for the same reason: they are alive to the panoply of material nature but have no insight into the nature of beauty or goodness itself. Though they share Plato's belief in promiscuity, they put it to a use that he would find infinitely uninteresting.

In the case of Dom Juan, as opposed to Alcibiades, the ideal that promiscuity serves is moral as well as aesthetic. Dom Juan shows none of Alcibiades' contrition or self-condemnation. He is unrepentant because he believes in what he does. He retains an outspoken honesty throughout his deceitfulness because he is convinced of the rightness of his behavior. "All beautiful women have a right to our love," he says, "and the accident of being the first comer should not rob others of the just claims that all of them have to our affection."

If one takes Dom Juan to be nothing but a conniving scoundrel, a bully and an ordinary rake, these words are simply ludicrous. Here he is, out to screw the universe, and he pretends that he is motivated by a concern for the rights of women! He later says: "If I had ten thousand hearts, I would give them all"—as if he were Christ giving himself in one act of *agapē* after another. What insolence, and what absurdity! The man's a buffoon! But one is also free to take the words at their face value, as the enunciation of a moral code to which the unlimited love of natural beauty may very well lead. If one loves the beautiful, one loves it wherever it occurs; and every instance has an equal right to our admiration. In this idea there is nothing insolent or absurd.

And yet, this interpretation of what Dom Juan means would also be deceptive. For it credits him with a *love* of beautiful things that he does not have, and for the same reason that he has no love of persons. In refusing to blind himself to new and

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further beauties, Dom Juan merely expresses the fact that nothing will ever satisfy him. His creed reveals no comprehension of love as a disinterested enjoyment. For him it reduces to hostility and a self-defeating possessiveness. Beauty is to be conquered, as if it were something alien and hateful—an enemy rather than an independent good in which one delights. And somehow the conquest of beauty is associated with the culmination of physical love-making. What a strange idea this is, but how typical of masculine instincts as they operate in western civilization. In his need to dominate the female, the occidental male feels that the beauty of her sexual allure is a good which she withholds from him prior to coitus. He must therefore subjugate her, take possession of her hidden treasure, occupy and invade her. In overcoming her resistance, he conquers her beauty, not realizing that for him much of her beauty consists in the fact of resistance itself. The underlying fallacy is in thinking that beauty *can* be conquered. Enemies can be conquered, and beautiful things can be possessed. But beauty itself, and above all the beauty of persons, can only exist in its own freedom. To possess it is to destroy it, to conquer it is to turn it into a material object which cannot satisfy since now it is dead. Yet this exhausts the entire trajectory of love for Dom Juan. It begins with the sense of beauty in another person, but then it quickly degenerates into a series of manoeuvers that eliminate the beautiful instead of furthering it:

> One experiences an extreme delight in subjugating, with a hundred attentions, the heart of a beautiful young woman; in seeing, day by day, the gradual progress that one makes; in pitting one's emotions, one's tears and one's sighs, against the innocence and the modesty of a soul that finds it hard to yield; in surmounting, step by step, all the tiny impediments that she rears against us; in overcoming the scruples in which she prides herself and in gently bringing her to where we want her. But once the game is won, nothing else remains and there is nothing more to hope for. All that delights one in passion is finished, and we can only slumber in the tranquillity of a sleepy love—unless another beauty comes along to re-awaken our desires and present us with the fascination of another conquest.

In all this, one is wrong to blame the cunning and the contrivance of Dom Juan. To say that he is a tactician and therefore not a lover is quite mistaken. The two *may* conflict, as in the sorrows of Julien Sorel, but they need not. The male organism is

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programmed to hunt for the female and to penetrate her in sexual pleasure. In relishing the day by day advances, and in becoming an astute campaigner, Dom Juan attests to the healthiness of his human animality. His pathology consists in something else: the inability to realize that sexual success involves much more than merely gratifying the original desire. Having brought the woman to where he wants her, Dom Juan insists that nothing else remains. How pitiful his saying there is nothing more to hope for. He seems to be asserting a universal fact, but really he is confessing his own basic failing. After the seduction, all that delights *him* is finished. But he knows it amounts to very little. That is why he must renew the experience endlessly. If he *were* able to enjoy the beauty of another person, he might not feel the need to move on at the very moment that intimacy has been established. Instead of repeating the same routine preliminaries, he might discover that a network of new desires awakened in him. He might even find that sexual beauty can be a mutual enjoyment that benefits each participant in unforeseeable ways.

These possibilities elude Dom Juan and thus all dalliance or constancy is for him a condition in which *"nous nous endormons dans la tranquillité."* In *De l'Amour* Stendhal uses similar words to talk about matrimony: "A soul made for passion feels in the first place that this happy life *irks him,* and perhaps, also, that it only gives him commonplace ideas" (his italics). Who can deny the sentiment? Marriage in the western world has always been a most imperfect institution. But even so, that passion to which Stendhal refers is still an imaginative love which Dom Juan scarcely understands. Having seen the beauty in a woman, he wants to snatch it for himself. Stendhal, as in his theory of crystallization, knows that one can use sex more creatively. For him love is a device by which the passionate male discovers fresh perfections in his beloved and thereby *makes* her more beautiful. Dom Juan has no such ability. And that is why he must always fail in love, though wonderfully successful at seduction.

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JOHN PECK

Vestibule

All day our paths had crossed, I'd missed you twice
Or three times—then, had come home tired to find
Your sweater on the couch, your shoes kicked off,
The coffee still warm in your waiting cup—
And lightly called your name, only to hear it
Measure the silences; then felt my eyes
Stray back across the sweater's rich abandon,
The shoes more delicate for lying empty,
The porcelain zero of the cup—but then you called,
Upstairs and far away. Your voice brought back
Another room we entered once together,
Catching our breaths—bare benches where the Shakers
Sat quiet after field work and prepared
To go together to the larger room.

Leaves from an Herbal

—for Robert Hass

1.

So easily, the eucalyptus:
Broken across the spine or crushed
Between the fingers, like our tandem words,
Extravagant, the spearhead leaves—
They stain the wind with citrus while the grass
Beneath them crisps to a dirty gold and blows
Gulleying toward the Sierra, toward the lynx
And catamount and slope-necked deer
Wary about the salt-licks.

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2.

Sharing that oldest fear,
We wish to give each other still
More handfuls of that harsh
Persistent Spanish grass:
To thread the foothills, or go down
The Coast Range, or at last walk through the velvet
Defiles to the valley, once again to hear
That sound no other living thing can make:
A thin, unbroken tempering of the very air,
As of metal raised and shaken at great distance
Into the conch of space.

3.

One summer I was hired to prune the grove,
Take out the lower branches and dead trees.
The seeds hung down in ropey clusters, brushed
Over my face, and popped clean in the heat.
I liked the stiff bite of the heartwood, heard
The back and forth stroke of the blade
Make the wet sound, acacia;
Saw thirty years go quick in the saw's kerf,
Whirled from the ripstroke, circling, to float down.
Then, legs spread wide, I bent
And from the standpipe took unbroken water—
Silvering off my jaws,
Ravelling into earth.

4.

We crush the daily slice
Of wet fact in the mouth—
How can we know the shape that waste will take
At last, while now, across the nearer slope,

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Brief cloudbreak spills its saucers of green light?
As if we could invert loss to look down
Its small end, aging already toward our gods.
As if these leaves could lose
Their incense, or the white ironbark
Its sweptwing veins, the same form young or old—
It rides air with the rippled sides of eels.
Think back—we stumbled blindly toward the pass
Beneath us, through the chill of dusk,
The cliff-brake wet about our legs, down through
The scalebark bodies of the yellow pine,
To come at dark upon the sawmill burners—
The bluntnose cones as tall as full-grown trees,
As red as carbuncles; and smelled
The pitch, alive, go acrid off downwind.

ZULFIKAR GHOSE

Come, Sailor

Not by journeying,
Odysseus (since to you the Mediterranean's
currents are erratic, violent mysteries),
not fresh explorations
now amidst the swollen seas,
Odysseus, will bring back the heart-soothing

vision, nor will the hills
again be purple near the town that was once
home; and sooner will the extinct birds rise
in imagined migrations
before your startled eyes
than your searching discover the particles

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of dust become again
compacted into masonry, the walls and domes
of fallen cities. Open gutters and sewers
ran out of those kingdoms
whose golden towers
only are remembered, and the fields of yellow grain

were sometimes black
with locusts. The hills of Rome, the isles
of Greece, even there, Odysseus. And still,
when you stand beside the sails
and look down at the tall
waves shouldering your ship, there, Odysseus, like

a drowned sailor
a body floats, its face yours and mine. Compulsive,
this voyaging—as if the next calm will settle
the sea-spray and drive
away the clouds until
the horizon offers the choice of a natural harbour,

where intermingled come
scents of thyme and rosemary, or a clearer
perspective of the ocean's routes, each one
an illusion that nearer
is that vision
which makes sons slam doors on their parents' home.

Chill breezes catalogue
again autumn's severities; the sky hurries eastward
and the gulls ride a swifter wind. The seas
twitch, and again the voice you heard
in ancient mythologies
calls: Come, sailor, journey towards the cold fog.

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DANIEL BRYANT

A Smile

—from the Chinese of Hu Shih

Ten years and more ago,
A man smiled at me.
At the time, I understood nothing,
Only felt the goodness of his smile.

I do not know what became of that man;
Only that smile of his yet remains:
Not only can I not forget him,
But the more I think of him, the more I find him amiable.

I have written many love poems for him,
And imagined him in many situations:
Some men have studied suffering,
And some have studied rejoicing.

Rejoicing is all right, and so is suffering,
But truly there is only that smile.
I've still never found that man who smiled,
But for the goodness of his smile I am thankful.

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MARCIA B. SIEGEL

Dancing in the Trees and Over the Roofs

IF MERCE CUNNINGHAM GIVES TWO-WEEK SEASONS at the Brooklyn Academy Opera House—and he does now—dance must indeed be booming. But then, where is the avant-garde? Well, dancing in trees, in swimming pools, on rooftops, and on the rocks in Long Island Sound for one thing. To watch dance in recent seasons, I sat on a marble floor, inched through a corridor with two-hundred other panicky people in a blackout, and was caught in a motorcycle stampede. I witnessed two full-blown nudity scares and hours of polite pornography. People danced with statues, played with animals, played badminton, walked on a wall, and hurled themselves blindfolded at a stepladder.

Modern dance in its short history has gone through two great cycles of exploration; it may now be entering a third. If I had to pick out the one driving preoccupation of Martha Graham's that has had the most widespread and lasting influence on other choreographers, it would be her concern with emotionality. No modern dancer since Graham has been able to avoid dealing with the idea that dancing is always an expression—or a denial—of the dancer's feelings. Merce Cunningham's most crucial legacy has been the idea of chance, the basic uniqueness—and hence equality—of all things.

By rejecting the traditional balletic form as the only acceptable Western dance image, Graham and the early moderns enlarged the expressive possibilities of all dance. Similarly, Cunningham broke open the compositional Pandora's box so that whole new notions about the nature of the dance process could begin to circulate. Although Cunningham personified the most revolutionary element in dance for twenty years, he remains in two important respects tied to traditional theater dance. He still uses highly trained dancers doing those stylizations of movement most people recognize as dance. And his works are customarily presented in proscenium stages within the conventional theater's notions of time, space, and a tolerably distant reciprocity between performer and audience. Virtually every young choreographer has freed himself of one or both of these preconditions.

The post-Cunningham dancers were quick to welcome "mixed-media"—film and other technological devices—but they have long since relinquished its development to the more affluent popular arts, from rock to opera, where it is used mainly as an extension of ordinary theater techniques. Instead, choreographers are investigating film, video and tape as elements that are in themselves interesting, and that

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can not only accompany and sometimes change the dance, but often transform it. Seamus Murphy's *Fabrication* (1971) televised the audience coming in and the dancers warming up, and screened them in a dark room where we waited for the piece to begin. At the end of the evening, videotapes that had been made of the audience during the performance were shown on four monitors. Thus the audience became performers as well as spectators.

Some choreographers have experimented with collage effects, requiring that the viewer suspend his need to perceive a whole thing at any given time. We must, instead, accept a more extended or pieced-together logic; we must agree that to see only a part of the dance is, in fact, to see the dance. In many of his works Rudy Perez intersperses movement with film or sound phrases. At the beginning of *Arcade* (1969), the audience successively hears the sound of a prize fight, sees a film of the dancers in the studio, printed in reverse in Dayglo colors, then finds in the brightening stage lights a line of dancers marching very slowly toward the footlights. Sometimes the dance movement will refer back or ahead to images in the film or sound score; at other times they overlap, as when the sound of a ping-pong game is heard and the dancers stand very still and whip their heads around to look in the direction where the ball was hit . . . and keep looking toward that side while the invisible ball is ralleyed back and forth several times.

The elements Perez puts together often seem incongruous, but his work is not surrealistic. In fact, none of the new generation is using found objects and irrelevant noises purely for the sake of dada, chance or shock. When Perez puts on roller skates in *Transit* (1969), they serve as a form of transportation and also become the object of an envious competition between himself and two other dancers. His use in *Coverage* (1970) of white coveralls, a blue hard-hat, a red headband, masking tape laid out in finicky lines on the floor, a Spanish conversation, and Kate Smith singing "God Bless America" makes its own kind of non-linear sense.

What Perez does with mixed-media, Twyla Tharp did with space and people in her piece at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Dancing in the Streets of Paris and London, Continued in Stockholm and Sometimes Madrid* (1970). Tharp herself explained the piece later as having been about a certain kind of duality that the dancer experiences, of plain ordinary living going on at the same time as dancing. For the spectator, the evening had from the start a hectic, jumbled feeling, so that one was often unable to tell who was dancing and who was watching. The piece was actually an assortment of short dance ideas, performed in various parts of the museum. Some things took place simultaneously in different rooms, some themes were repeated. No particular dancing space was delineated—some were suggested by the museum's architecture, like a sculpture court or a staircase, but

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others just evolved as blue-jeaned dancers erupted out of the audience or led little processions of spectators from one place to another. The predictability of the event was further broken up by the fact that the audience numbered several hundred, so that even if you knew where a part of the dance was taking place, you couldn't always get in a good position to see it.

Taken as a series of incidents and settings, *Dancing in the Streets* was a collage, but the piece also made a flowing, constantly changing whole, like a carnival. It would have been impossible for any two members of the audience to perceive the dance alike. Many critics and spectators, in fact, were deeply disturbed by this. As soon as they realized that no one was going to tell them what "the dance" was—show it to them in one neat package of space and time—they became anxious and even hostile. They worried that they were missing "the dance" because some things were happening that they could not see. Or they concluded that the whole affair was a put-on.

There is another segment of the contemporary dance scene which is kinder to the audience's undeclared need for authority and its fear of anarchy. These choreographers, of whom the best known is probably Meredith Monk, also employ the loaded visual field, the abundance of simultaneous and apparently unrelated stimuli. But they help the viewer locate the most important part of any given scene by more traditional theater methods.

In Meredith Monk's *Needle Brain Lloyd and the Systems Kid* (1970), there was an extraordinary croquet game that, although it was always visible to the audience, had the effect of a series of still pictures or movie frames with long mysterious gaps between exposures. The game occupied a small corner of a vast space—the main campus of Connecticut College, in fact. Because there was a great deal of activity going on in the rest of the space, one only noticed the croquet players intermittently. The game was designed so that the players proceeded fairly conventionally for a few moments, then accelerated into drunkenness or violence or perhaps the irrationality born of a broken movie projector, then froze as if they had been sprayed with a paralyzing liquid. All the time they were advancing toward the audience across the campus, but they never came within close range.

Like a tape loop, a dance idea can be cut at a certain point, joined to itself, and repeated almost indefinitely. Repetition is used by many people to create a kind of boredom as a cleansing antithesis to theatricality. Sometimes, however, the repeated act becomes something else simply because of its repetition. Yvonne Rainer's *Connecticut Composite* (1969) took place in the Connecticut College gym. If one looked down on the gym floor from the balcony one could see four or five clearly defined areas, with different activities going on in each. Down the center length of the room marched Rainer's People Wall, a line of people whose task was to walk, shoulder to shoulder, back and forth

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from one end of the gym to the other. The solid phalanx they formed, eight or more abreast, proved unstoppable; it slid over, under and around anyone in its way, and eventually people from the audience began joining it. The People Wall, having established an impervious path, divided the room lengthwise, even though it was not always physically occupying that entire route.

The repetition of a pattern creates certain expectations in the viewer. When William Dunas, a brilliant soloist whose work often depends upon doing violence to himself, begins shaking his head very fast with a smile on his face, we think first of irony, hypocrisy, madness. Dunas keeps shaking his head, though, and shaking it, until we begin to experience kinesthetic discomfort of some kind—horror, distaste, tension, nausea—and the visual illusion that his face is wider, distorted, smiling and smirking and grotesquely stretched, like a cubist painting.

Seamus Murphy's *Velvet* (1970) depended on the idea that the mind can retain images and superimpose one image on another. His dance consisted of four sections, of basically the same choreography, that took place in four parts of a single building. At no time was the audience able to "see" the entire dance. First the dancers were in a room with glass walls, the audience outside looking in at them. Though the dancers had music, the audience could not hear it. Drapes obscured parts of the room all the time. In the second section the audience peered over a balcony into a sculpture court, seeing only snatches of movement but hearing the music, Satie's first *Gymnopédie* in an orchestrated version. Then, in a theater, we could see everything, but there was no music. Finally, in another theater, the dance, with sound, was done in the dark. Not only could we tell what was happening by that time, but when some new thematic material was introduced, aurally, we had an idea what that was too.

The mechanical processes of film and tape make alterations in time a simple matter. Rudy Perez is a master at prolonging movement. His dances proceed with an unhurried care, as if each instant were precious. The viewer may be impatient with this decelerated pulse, but after his nervous system accommodates to it, he can look at the dance with unusual attention, and when the scene quickens for any reason, events assume an unusual urgency.

Many people have reconsidered the time span of a dance. Conventional theater practice demands that the progress and duration of a dance be ordered to build a climax, die down a little, build higher, and finally come to an end. Merce Cunningham dispensed with all that, proving that a dance could be accomplished within a given clock time as well as within dramatic time. After that someone like Phoebe Neville could decide to let the dance flow on without much change in tension, to an ending that suddenly seems quite dramatic because it brings together all the previous unstressed images to make a very

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strong statement. In her *Untitled Duet* (1970) a woman with a cloth covering her head kneels beside a man stretched out on the floor. The man slowly moves his arms, one joint at a time, through a series of positions that suggest praying, embracing, pleading. Finally the man's arms go limp and the woman bends over his body.

Meredith Monk and the more cinematically inclined choreographers also play with time, often using a slow-motion approach that differs radically from Perez's streched-out sense of time or Neville's delayed impact. Monk achieves a very slow speed by demanding that the dancer put his body under tight control, holding back his energy so that, like a movie, he could be stopped at any moment, in any position. This puts great restrictions on the type of movement; it will have to be relatively simple, earthbound, and planned. Meredith Monk has not been interested in complicated dance movement per se for some time, though, and her work depends as much on objects, symbols, colors, spaces, sounds, and fantasies as on the people who inhabit them.

I often have the feeling that Meredith Monk regards people as objects, and I get the same feeling from Robert Wilson, who, in *The Life and Times of Sigmund Freud* (1969) and *Deafman Glance* (1971), used a proscenium stage as a container for what seemed to be the total ingredients of a mind he has invented. This subconscious space is crowded with images that shift gradually into and out of prominence, memories that articulate themselves and fade away, visions and conflicts and paradoxes that up to now have existed only in the incoherent recesses of the psyche. Poets have captured some of the mind's confusion, but probably no artist has given a better visual representation of its flow and intricacy.

There is in the approach of Meredith Monk, Robert Wilson and others a return to the idea of the artist/creator, the single mind shaping and governing all elements of a stage work, that relates them to Martha Graham and perhaps to theatrical figures like Schlemmer, Meierhold and Cocteau, instead of to their nearer forebears. One possible link between the dance generations is Alwin Nikolais, who has always been his own designer, artisan, inventor, as well as choreographer, composer and conceptualizer.

But while Nikolais was working away in his Lower East Side theater, Merce Cunningham and John Cage led a reaction against the idea of a controlling genius who imposed his will on the event. They insisted on the right of the event to be itself, and they devised innumerable schemes for keeping themselves out of its way. In many respects the current generation of choreographers can be discussed in terms of whether they are still pursuing the theories of Cunningham and Cage, or whether they have returned to more traditional, authoritarian forms of art.

Cunningham's dances are always concerned with immediacy, with

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the realness of what the dancer is doing at that moment. He refuses to assume a metaphorical or illusionary intent. In other words, his dancing is not about anything else. He means for whatever theatricality there is to arise out of the accidental conjunction of events as they happen.

In different ways this kind of concreteness characterizes much contemporary work. Rainer's dancers, for instance, and those of Perez and Cunningham, experience (that is, project) fleeting pleasure, occasional somberness or surprise, and most consistently a state of alert receptivity. William Dunas, whose aim is to probe deeper into the emotions, laughs till he retches, runs till he exhausts himself, swallows handfuls of real pills. Gus Solomons Jr., in *Cat. #CCS70-1013NSSR-GSJ9M* (1970), does a long series of difficult Cunninghamesque movements—isolations, contortions, counter-rhythms. Suddenly, coolly, as if his head had nothing to do with what is on his body's mind, he cancels out all those conflicting energies by slashing an obscenity across a caricature he has drawn of himself. In Elizabeth Keen's *On Edge* (1970), four dancers perched, swung, leaned, balanced in a row of brick arches bordering a roof fifteen stories above the street. *On Edge* was given only once, to a small invited audience. Miss Keen told me later, sounding as if she had just rescued someone from drowning without knowing how to swim: "I'm sorry I tried it. It was foolish. Someone could have gotten hurt."

From the idea of the dance being what it is and nothing more comes the denial of character. Cunningham's dancers never impersonate anybody, neither literary personages, nor philosophical ideas, nor even dancers bristling with stage animation. Yvonne Rainer, proceeding from this assertion of the dancer's integrity, stripped away his other disguises—costume, the trappings of the stage, performing style, and even technique and choreography. She gave him very simple movements to do, games to play, tasks to accomplish. It is the energy of the event that she considers important. Trisha Brown focusses on very taxing physical exertion, such as working against gravity to create an illusion of uprightness while walking sideways on a wall, supported by a harness. Steve Paxton has been working on the phenomenon of performing itself, trying to find out if the performer can preserve anything of himself while several hundred people are looking on. This has led him to use the simplest kinds of activity—walking, turning, sitting—and to employ nudity in some circumstances, as, I suppose, the ultimate form of exposure.

Conversely, Monk and Wilson's work could be called the ultimate form of disguise. Whatever they are, the dancers must not be themselves. In a concert Monk gave at the Billy Rose Theater (Feb. 1969), the audience was directed to "lobby exhibits" during intermissions. These turned out to be people huddled in boxes with peepholes. No matter how close the audience can get physically to these performers—

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and often it's close enough to touch—ordinary signs of communication are not allowed to flicker through their poses. Monk deliberately removes her work from its audience; instead of here and now, she wants us to be conscious of there and then, the image she so elaborately puts together. In *Needle Brain Lloyd* there is, among other assorted characters and grotesques, a party of pioneers that makes its way across a field and sets up camp. When the audience comes back for the second half of the piece, it is night. The pioneers sit in front of their tents in the dark, light campfires, cook food, sing.

To sustain such intense, complex imagery requires an almost hermetic concentration. This kind of art is exclusive rather than inclusive. The work is what the artist says and nothing more. Cunningham on the other hand says the work is that and everything else, the skittish remarks of the audience, a plane flying overhead, accidental darkness, smoke, and all the other chance events we euphemistically ignore in the conventional theater. Meredith Monk does everything she can to see that they don't even occur. Her programs are filled with admonitions to "withhold applause until the end of the program," "stay seated until an usher assists you to the ramp or the elevator," and to go at certain times to certain places described or drawn very explicitly. During *Needle Brain Lloyd,* technical director Beverly Emmons walked along pushing spectators off a minute strip of turf. "Things happen in this foot of grass," she told us.

Very large scale works are being tried by nearly everyone, but not for the sake of achieving mass precision-drill effects or spectacles, as they were in pre-World War II Germany for instance. Choreographers want to find out what very large numbers of people or enormous spaces will do to the performing process and to the audience's experience.

Meredith Monk used a college campus in *Needle Brain Lloyd* because she wanted to dramatize ideas of panoramic proportions. Since the Renaissance, the theater has simulated deep space with painted scenery and numerous other illusions. Why not use real space? Aside from sports, the only planned events we ever see in large spaces are created for film. What happens when the artist has real distance to play with, instead of the flattened-out dimensionality of the screen? People rowing across a lake with a lantern in the bow of the boat. Horses galloping down a field. Motorcycles roaring like mad cyclopes through the darkness. Cryptic tableaux being enacted high in the windows of a blacked-out building. You could see those things on a screen too, but they never happen *to* you, so they are always to a much greater extent fictitious.

In the less representational imagery of Twyla Tharp's *Medley* (1969), given first at Connecticut College and later in Central Park, thirty-odd people fanned out across a large field and did one movement sequence as slowly as they could. This did not produce unison

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movement, of course, since every individual's slowest speed is different. The great distance forced the spectator's gaze to splay out, noting individuals briefly, glancing off, returning, to see that they had changed position, like the dolls in *Coppélia* that come to life only when your back is turned.

The inherent fascination of people-as-themselves is assumed—and without artifice—by Yvonne Rainer and several others. Deborah Hay, who shared a program with Rainer at the Billy Rose Theater (1969), showed a piece called *26 Variations on 8 Activities for 13 People plus Beginning and Ending.* The thirteen people were all girls, variously dressed, variously locomoting across the stage, ascending or bypassing some low ramps, jumping or stepping off the ramps, and turning to go back to their starting point. Rainer and Steve Paxton have noted that a dancer's training gives him a certain way of moving and of presenting himself as a performer. They like to use non-dancers to avoid this stereotype, and they assert that the less complex the movement, the more individual and personal will be the characteristics presented.

Another way of using the very large group is to create with and for it a religious atmosphere. James Cunningham, in many ways the most irreverent of all the young choreographers—because he dares to be funny—is also the most successful at invoking a kind of unrehearsed spirituality. Cunningham, who begins classes, rehearsals, and often performances with Yoga exercises, seems to touch a nerve of communal expression. Whether it's twenty people quietly placing lighted candles on the floor (*The Sea of Tranquility Motel,* 1969) or nearly a hundred doing a mass rock improvisation which the audience joins (*The Junior Birdsmen,* 1970), Cunningham develops a mood that is theatrical without the theater's detachment.

Arriving at group experience through Central European theories of pure movement, the Philadelphia-based Group Motion can put itself into near-trance or work up an orgiastic rage. Following a New York performance of *The Great Theatre of Oklahoma Calls You* (1970), the group did exercises in transferring impulses and energies from one dancer to another. The performance ended with members of the audience participating in an experiment that involved touching, moving, and trusting others. This last looked like a gentle sort of group therapy session, but there were moments earlier in the performance of such compelling intensity that one could easily see the roots of mob violence and manipulation if some less supportive, permissive leaders were in control.

Nearly all experimental dance has a lot to do with the relationship of the performance to the audience. It's no longer a question of whether there should be "audience participation," but in what way the audience will contribute to the event. Meredith Monk and Seamus Murphy assume that the artist is a kind of instructor, who im-

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parts his vision to an essentially passive audience; hence, we are directed, herded, sometimes stampeded from one place to another during the performance. We are even made to get in each other's way if the plan calls for a crowd so dense that viewing will be difficult.

Rainer and Tharp on the other hand let us wander wherever we wish and see whatever we discover, as if we and the performers were all attending the same party. The use of non-dancers can help bring performers and audience closer together. But asserting that the audience has some responsibility for what takes place instead of merely witnessing it is not to say there is anything haphazard about the choreographer's view of the work. Even those works that are "improvisational" are not free-for-alls, but are based on previously established rules—a time structure, certain movement materials, a problem to be solved—and often the dancers have worked with these rules until they are honed to a fine degree of responsiveness to each other. Then, as in Tharp's *Dancing in the Streets,* the very presence of the audience transforms a fairly stable performance situation into an improvisational one.

In their different ways, most experimental people are choreographing for the audience as much as for the performers. They are all, it seems to me, trying to involve us more, to make us aware how special is the moment of our attendance. This is true whether they include us in their games, like Rainer; make us part of the scenery, like Tharp; elicit our physical discomfort by brutalizing themselves, like Dunas; or pull us into the flow of their personal dynamic, like Perez. James Cunningham invites us up to dance; Seamus Murphy austerely points out how distant performers and audience are from each other, then by degrees draws us in closer to the performed world, until we are all in the dark together. Even Meredith Monk, whose pieces seem the most dogmatic and predetermined, the most like movies, works with such enormous and complex production elements that we are aware even as the thing is reeling off around us that there can be no rerun.

If I have not mentioned specific content, themes, ideas in describing these choreographers' works, it's not because there are none. These works are concerned with dancing, performing, living, and the processes by which those things are accomplished, much more than they are with any literary, dramatic or philosophical themes. The choreographers want us above all to see what the work *is,* not what it means.

When James Cunningham puts on a mask or does a soft-shoe dance or sings a perfectly good homemade imitation of something we first heard in a Fred Astaire movie, he is, I think, focussing on James Cunningham the performer and on the way that performer uses these traditional theater devices; of only secondary interest, if at all, is what the song says and how it fits in with all the other songs and

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events in that particular entertainment. If Rudy Perez's *Coverage* collects artifacts of the hardhat psychology, what's important about the dance is the slow intensity and deliberate care with which Perez looks at the collection, not his moral attitude toward it. Meredith Monk alludes to all sorts of political, social and cultural trends, but her works are really monuments to their own epic creation. Twyla Tharp, before she started allowing the environment to work its own process on her dance, used to insist that the audience concentrate on the spiderlike methodology by which she had devised the movement, until even the excitement of the dancing was segmented into ticks of a metronome and boxes marked out on the floor.

Someone going to see any of these choreographers for the first time might well ask the familiar question—but is it dance? No. And, most emphatically, yes. What makes these works dance when they have denied so many of our notions about what dance is, and when they employ so many techniques that have become identified with other theater forms, is their emphasis on the flow of events through time and space, and their belief that this flow creates its own validity independent of words or techniques. Experimental dance today is about dancing, in the broadest sense, and it will probably take at least another 20 years to explore the possibilities of that.

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CHARLES W. MILLARD

Varieties of Cubism

BETWEEN 1908 AND 1909, BRAQUE, PICASSO, and Raoul Dufy began exploring the sorts of pictorial dissolution that led to the accomplishments of Analytic Cubism in the years 1909-1912. These dissolutions were based on Cézanne's transformation of Impressionism—not on the increasingly dense achievements of his late works but on the open yet firmly structured pictures painted by the Aix master somewhat earlier in his career. Awareness of those pictures was particularly great around 1908 because of Cézanne's death in 1906 and the series of exhibitions of his work in galleries and at the Salon d'Automne in late 1907, and it would have been the more congenial early pictures rather than the still unseeable late canvasses that provided young artists in Paris with the visual material they were seeking.

Although similarities among the pictures by the three early Cubists are in retrospect more striking than their differences, Dufy emerges as in many ways the least daring of the group. While he went far toward a linear structure unifying the picture across its surface, he vitiated that structure with diagonals implying recession in the centers of his pictures and functioning in such a way that the structure's lateral expansiveness was not reinforced by pressure from within. Braque, on the other hand, densified the centers of his compositions and thereby unified their effect. In the respective versions of *Trees at L'Estaque* (1908) by Dufy and Braque one sees immediately how the latter artist has brought the trees forward, stressing their pictorial importance, while Dufy has allowed them to recede, deferring to their identity as represented objects. In the same pictures, Dufy's color, largely Cézanne-derived ochre and green, is more intense than Braque's and its tonal contrast greater and hence more disruptive of the composition. Braque has restricted himself to ochres, grays and blacks, suppressing green and keeping his tones within a fairly narrow range of relatively high intensity. He has, however, used variations of hue and slight variations of tone in such a way as to suggest naturalistic shading, particularly along the trunks of the trees, something Dufy managed to avoid. The third member of the trio, Picasso, had more to overcome by way of conventional inclinations motivated by a powerful personality, and in his pictures of the same time he not only continued to use greater variety of hue than either Dufy or Braque, but employed cubifying distortions toward expressive rather than purely formal ends. He used such distortions partly to emphasize the figure and set it apart from the ground, rather than integrating figure and ground, and he thus kept the sense of solid represented object which Braque and

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Dufy had already begun to give up. Furthermore, the arrangements of Picasso's planes tended rather to echo and reinforce the given shape of the canvas than to find ways of circumventing it, as is the case with the ovoid compositional format already suggested in the L'Estaque pictures.

By 1909 Braque had taken another step toward reducing contrasts of hue and tone *(Fishing Boats)* so that even though there are distinct variations of hue his pictures give the effect of monochrome. Although he continued to use such variations as remained to suggest conventional shading, Braque equalized the pictorial weight of represented objects and of the background by breaking them into areas of roughly equal size, and by piling these areas up toward the top of the picture in such a way that they spread themselves evenly across the surface. He also introduced a more obvious and tachiste paint application that simultaneously emphasized the surface by its physicality and opened that surface by making obvious the spaces between strokes, thus suggesting continuous atmosphere rather than continuous substance. This paint application tended to de-emphasize the physicality of represented objects in favor of that of the picture itself and it suppressed figure-ground distinctions by treating every pictorial element alike. At the same date, Picasso was struggling with his more monumental but more conventional compositions, using hue and tonal variation as if they were shading and carefully distinguishing figure from ground *(Seated Woman)*.

By 1910-1911, both artists had abandoned themselves almost entirely to the implications of their pictorial researches, and when Picasso finally freed himself of his more conventional tendencies he threw himself into Cubism with a rigor and intensity far surpassing that of Braque. What happened in the painting of both men during these years constitutes the most revolutionary aspect of the Cubist achievement, and a statement of new pictorial principles that was to guide much of what happened in subsequent 20th-century painting. The linear structures that had been developing since the first Cubist explorations found their final development as armatures on which the compositions were hung. When Braque, Picasso, and Dufy had first made their planar simplifications, linear patterns resulted from the junctions of the planes employed, an effect Cézanne had tended to avoid by giving non-geometrical shapes to his areas of flat paint application. The presence of these patterns was reinforced in Picasso's work by a native attraction to conventional draftsmanship that made him want to continue outlining his forms. With equal stress on all pictorial elements and the approach of all such elements to the picture plane, planar intersections, contours, and edges began to function together as a linear web spread evenly across the painting. By 1910-1911, this web had become discontinuous in the sense that the planes or shapes it tended to define were left open along one or more

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sides to give an effect of overlapping or transparency (Picasso, *La Pointe de la Cité;* Braque, *Still Life with Dice and Pipe*). Represented objects, thus, began to lose both their identity and their palpability. This meant that shape as such became of infinitely less importance than previously, and that by eliding into one another pictorial elements tended to disappear altogether in favor of a total unified configuration, an effect enhanced by the tachiste paint application which, as has been suggested, opened the picture surface by its discontinuity and by the imprecision of the applied paint shapes. Furthermore, color was banished almost entirely and what have the appearance of monochromatic compositions were worked out completely in terms of tonal variation. The temporary abandonment of color was necessary because most hues were too assertive to contribute to the effects the Cubists were then seeking and would have added to the search for pictorial dissolution a complicating element with which they were not then prepared to cope. Because these compositions of 1910-1911 were worked out largely in monochrome, their tonal variations have the effect of chiaroscuro, a chiaroscuro developed in terms of compositional rather than naturalistic demands. So long as the planes of Cubist compositions were attached to objects the temptation to shade them naturalistically was almost overwhelming, but as linear patterns became discontinuous and planes transparent it quickly became apparent that shading could be used non-naturalistically and wholly in terms of the demands of the composition. What Picasso and Braque arrived at in their masterpieces of these years were atmospheric canvasses in which pictorial structure was almost wholly dissolved and in which a transparent luminescence was controlled by the evanescent linear web through which one looked into infinity. Far from making pictures in which surface was emphasized, these were pictures in which surface was dissolved, and only their linear patterns kept them from being wholly abstract.

Certain secondary devices aided and helped control this atmospheric painting. As traditional structure was de-emphasized, the squareness of the normal canvas became both bothersome and irrelevant. Since compositions merely shaded off toward the edges leaving greater areas of vagueness at the corners—the deepest points of the canvas (those furthest from the center)—it was natural that corners should eventually be clipped off, resulting in an oval shape which also reinforced compositional continuity. This format further enhanced the concentration of structural elements in the center, a reversal of normal perspective procedure that also derived from Cézanne. The cubists' use of ritualized shapes—bottles, violins, etc.—eased the problems inherent in total dissociation from known objects in that such shapes could be disassembled into their component contours without losing their identity, being at once recognizable and highly abstract. The balancing of these various elements took all the mastery available to the painters

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involved. The risk, on the one hand, was too dense a structure which would choke the picture to death and, on the other, too uncontrolled a structure which would allow it to fall apart. Precisely the right combination of atmosphere and undelimited depth with structure and surface emphasis was required to make Analytic Cubist pictures work, and that so many of them did work is an index of the genius of their creators at this particular moment in history. Braque's and Picasso's paintings of 1910-1911 are as advanced as painting was to become for almost half a century and, partly because of that fact, match in quality anything that was accomplished by other aspects of Cubism or its successors.

The impact and importance of this type of Cubism can be seen in the effect it at once had on artists not only in Paris but around the world. Gleizes, who understood fairly profoundly what was being accomplished by Picasso and Braque, applied Cubist principles with some success, although he consistently inverted overall Cubist structure by opening the centers of his compositions and concentrating his linear structures at their edges. This analogy to traditional perspective betrayed his conventional ambitions, as did his consistent creation of large multi-figure Salon-type compositions and the introduction of carefully defined naturalistic elements into many of his pictures. Picabia, Herbin, and others used Cubist structure as an appliqué or a method of representing objects rather than as a transformation of pictorial structure. This is most evident in the boundedness and identifiability of major parts of their compositions and of the objects within those compositions. Fauconnier was also given to this use of Cubism, as well as to naturalistic shading which eventually made his pictures anti-Cubist, however much they may have been geometricized. Delaunay, and to a certain extent Leger, used a Cubist-like structure for dynamic ends, making it the vehicle of statements about the speed and mechanization of modern life. For a brief moment around 1914 Leger also developed a naturalistic and object-oriented version of Cubism that was highly successful, but he seemed unable to follow it up and his work evolved in quite other and more conventional directions. The dynamic direction was that followed by the Futurists, who made Cubist devices simply a modernist excuse to convey certain poetical messages. In general, Cubism outside France was directed toward other than purely pictorial ends, the southern countries preferring a frenetic evocation of modern life that was far from the developed and self-contained explorations of the best of Cubism, and the northern a kind of color expressionism cloaked in quasi-Cubist structure. For reasons not entirely clear, artists in Czechoslovakia and Russia seem to have comprehended the Cubist revolution at a fairly profound level, although the latter then turned it to other uses in Constructivism.

Within France two artists turned Cubism to personal ends that

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eventually transformed the style itself. Both Metzinger and Juan Gris developed a Cubist variation which consisted of fragmenting naturalistically represented segments of reality rather than re-constructing entire compositions in wholly new terms. Gris particularly clung to linear definition and never surrendered his interest in density, expressed largely in his use of black and an opaque gray *(Fruit Dish and Carafe)*. Because of these devices, his compositions have a flatness and surface presence quite different from the atmospheric quality of Braque's and Picasso's pictures, and he was also able to use color more freely. Gris's was an art that must have been more comprehensible to contemporary eyes than the extreme explorations of Braque and Picasso. Because it was less internal, less introspective, more striking, and declared its novelty in a louder voice, it must also have been at first perceived as more revolutionary. It seems to have been Gris's brand of Cubism that became most influential and most widely understood, the more so as it lent itself to easy understanding, and it was probably responsible for the next step in Cubism, that toward the declaration of the pictorial surface in terms of absolute flatness. Both Braque and Picasso turned this way, and it is not unlikely that having ventured into what was then pictorial outer space, they hesitated to take the next step toward total abstraction by letting go entirely of pictorial structure, turning back instead to the object and its identification with the pictures they were painting. This move toward Gris' variety of Cubism was announced by two devices taken up around 1912-1913. The first was collage, which emphasized the object quality of the picture not only by the introduction of actual objects but by asserting the absolute flatness and presence of the picture surface. At first, single pasted objects served as repoussoirs emphasizing the infinite recession of the rest of the picture. Gradually, however, they came to make up entire compositions, compositions which then consisted solely of surface. Since cut and pasted paper had clearly defined edges, collage not only reintroduced relationships of shape but also drawing in a new form, and made composing important in a way that it had not been to earlier Cubism. The second of the devices which pointed toward a new Cubism was the use of a rather gross form of pointillist facture by Braque and Picasso about 1914. Aggregations of dots were a middle ground between the absolute openness of earlier pictures and the absolute opacity of later ones, since they had definite character as planes while at the same time being transparent. Gradually these dotted areas became denser, until finally they turned into the flat planes of the color which also had begun to come back to painting about this time. By 1915, Cubism had been almost entirely transformed into a more traditional style to which color and the square canvas returned. Surface explorations were pursued in relation to the shape of the canvas and to the dense black or highly colored backgrounds on top of which planes of other

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colors were manipulated. Almost inevitably, one or more of those planes attached itself to the edge of the canvas, thereby locking the image to the picture's overall configuration and continuing the holistic tradition of Cubism in altered terms (Picasso; *Woman with Guitar*). Light and atmosphere were no longer an issue in these canvases, which, if they were easier to create and to understand in that they more clearly related to past artistic conventions, were no less powerful in their own terms. Their greatest danger, particularly for Braque and Picasso, was that they opened up less challenging paths that could, and in many instances did, lead to works of lesser quality developed in increasingly conventional terms.

Cubism, then, consisted of two quite distinct movements, the first a wholly revolutionary dissolution of pictorial structure, the second a more conventional assertion of the importance of color and composition, linked by the works of Juan Gris. If the latter—Synthetic Cubism—most immediately affected the artistic world around it, it is the former—Analytic Cubism—that one sees as more daring and prophetic. Its willingness to sacrifice structure to an inner atmospheric light, to open painting entirely to effects of insubstantiality and to develop pictures independently of the normal anchors of objects and color embodied an artistic courage unique in the 20th century. That it should have been followed by a period of relative conservatism is both natural and predictable. Where the suggestions it made for the future will lead, now that they have been married to a mastery of color, remains to be seen.

Notes on Contributors *(cont.)*

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Asterisk indicates a new contributor.

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VERNON YOUNG

Signor Petri and Monsieur Chabrol: It's Murder

ELIO PETRI'S *Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion*[1] has appealed to film buffs who have for years overstated the case for Godard, Bunuel, Losey, Lester and ever so many others. It even appealed to those intrepid Hollywood activists of the M.P. Academy of A. & S. who twist members' arms to vote annually for the Obviously Best of All Possibles each year. This year *Investigation of a Citizen* was voted Best Foreign Film. I am pained to add that many critics I had begun to love—from a distance—were also convinced that it was a Very Important Film. A *fortissimo* film: that's what it certainly is, and it *is* the work of a director who has mastered his cinema vocabulary, and it does include a performance by Gian Maria Volonte fairly irresistible if you have an ounce of pity in you for what it means to an actor to use up that much blood sugar in a torrid climate. For all else it is mere horseplay, jeering and sycophancy doing duty for subversive social criticism.

Petri opens his movie with ingratiating vulgarity (ingratiating to those for whom the best things in life are raw). A chief of police with a recognizably anal disposition strips himself, folds his clothes neatly, steps dispassionately into bed with his mistress and, while the camera at mid-distance observes the obvious humps and undulations of intercourse beneath the bed-clothes, he cuts her throat with a razor-blade. Thereafter he tramps bloody footprints around the apartment, scatters clues, like bread-crumbs, to his identity and continues with deadly insolence and mounting histrionic virtuosity to exploit the not very radical message of the film—that if you're an important civic official you can get away with murder. No matter how often and blatantly this sinner rubs the noses of his subordinates and of the press and of almost Everyone in Italy into the sanguinary evidence of his crime, nobody wants to believe he is guilty. This goes on and on at a high-farce level; within a half-hour *wir sind im bilde,* over our bloody heads, and it takes rather less shrewdness than that of a sophomore student to predict that nobody will *ever* believe the police commissioner and that we are seeing a parable of our wicked profiteering society in which absolute power corrupts absolutely—the most careless aphorism voiced by that otherwise intelligent man—and nobody has a conscience except a mob of ephebes like those who, even as Petri was shooting his film, were re-staging the Paris student revolt in Rome.

A clearly contended proposition of this film—that if you're against student riots you're a fascist—is one I can no longer dismiss as a merely Italian aberration, since such feeble inferences are being eagerly drawn

[1] The original title: *Indagine su un Cittadino al di Sopra di Ogni Sospetto.*

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everywhere, especially by the middle-aged and unmilitant who, to avenge themselves for their unlived lives, are cheering on the revolution against themselves. To play safe, Petri accommodates a few anti-Left jokes, together with a sneer at Freud (by way of Marcuse?) for believing that civilisation is grounded on repressions. The film is a better argument *for* Freud than against him. Be that as it may, a comic interlude reports numerous tokens of political hope chalked on public walls, dutifully erased every decade by a special police squad: Mussolini, Togliatti, Lenin, Khrushchev, Mao and so on. Accusing Conscience appears in a prophetic *envoi:* a knowing mop-headed student, too contemptuous to give crucial evidence against the guilty man. Time has not yet run out for the Commissioner but some day soon Youth will collectively arise, a fraternity of avenging angels, and bring Armageddon and the new Millennium to us all.[2] *Déja vu, ad nauseam.*

I should prefer to leave this exercise in savage opportunism without reservations, but I have a heart—and grateful eyes and ears. Gian Maria Volonte's performance as the police commissioner and of several authoritarian avatars is breath-takingly diverse. In dazzling succession he is dry, fanatical, weightily sarcastic, grim, feline, abject, sexually hysterical, lackey-like and poker-stiff as a staff brigadier. Towards these ends he uses *everything,* with fantastic conviction: voice, eyes, mouth, hands-and-elbows, the way he walks, sits, puts on a tie, looks weary, plays obsequious, cajoles or screams at high C. He could no doubt have delivered the role with even half the discharge of adrenalin but when an Italian director is determined to make a point and make it and make it again, nothing less than grand opera will serve him.

If *Investigation of a Citizen* indicates the direction Petri will now pursue—the direction taken by the crowd—it may be well to recall, to his greater glory and before it disappears from the general memory, the perfect film he made in 1967, *Each to His Deserts (A Ciascuno il Suo),* centered, with a difference, on the same ugliness—murder, incorporated and ratified by an imperium of fear. We know the setting, if not at first hand, from tourist-office windows: Sicily near Palermo, tiled roofs of a cubist town cradled by the warm blue sea of the Phoenicians and Theocritus. A fatally honest teacher, Paolo, believes that a peasant accused of shooting an apothecary, Luigi, while the man was hunting wild fowl (a brilliantly filmed action, shortly after the opening sequence), is being framed by the Mafia society, which had Luigi killed to prevent his making disclosures that would incriminate several solid pillars of the community. Encouraged by a friendly lawyer, Rosello (Gabriele Ferzetti), locally celebrated for his dedication to justice, Paolo plods his breathless way from clue to clue, like a hypnotized fly treading the sticky labyrinth

[2] The only comparable touch I can think of in a recent work at this level of prestige, equally contemptible because, like Petri's, it was a lazy and calculated way of seducing Liberal friends, was in Bergman's TV film. *The Sanctuary,* where the off-screen voice of the assassinated Martin Luther King, rolling out that I-had-a-dream stuff, was enlisted as a symbol of the universal failure of love!

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of a wolf spider, obediently reporting to Rosello the progress of his investigations. His quest is assisted by the grieving widow of the dead man, Luisa (Irene Papas, who never looked lovelier, in a sinister-contralto way), half-prepared to share his embraces but fighting him off until the ninth hour. Slowly, the horrible truth is unfolded; the closer Paolo gets to the answer, the more certainly he wraps himself in doom, for his trail leads him inescapably to his avuncular counsel, the lawyer, Rosello. When Rosello, confronted, threatens to kill him, Paolo plays his trump: the facts, he says, will outlive him; they are recorded in his diary, safely locked away in the schoolhouse. Pure bluff but for the moment Rosello is thwarted, giving Paolo time to plan his flight with the beautiful widow of Luigi. Unfortunately, he reveals to her the strategy by which he has outwitted Rosello; without further amenities he soon finds himself bundled into a car by Mafia henchmen who drive him to a storage bin under a cliff and kill him. They simply blow him to pieces with dynamite.

Next and final scene—a church in Palermo, sunlight, a procession in the streets. Paolo's funeral? Oh no—there's not enough left of him to bury or cremate: a wedding—Rosello and Luisa. (Luisa had of course betrayed Luigi to Rosello, to begin with, and in the original story, I am told, *she* kills Paolo, after satisfying her immediate lust for him. I can't but think the filmed version is somewhat more acceptable!) Much kissing of hands and cheeks and the good cheer of numerous eminent citizens whose skins have been saved. Rosello, elegant and unruffled, embraces his pale-black bride as everyone crowds into the church behind the happy couple and towards the camera. The movement is from blazing sunlight into the cool shadowed secrecy of the interior, the invited company becoming a bobbing motion of heads and murmurs, soon faceless, blurred, blacking out to grey, as the sunlight vanishes, then silence and no images at all.

Malevolent stuff—edited with superlative control. Petri's camera (behind it, Luigi Kuveiller, the same who was to shoot *Investigation*) analyzes and illuminates every episode. He never holds a scene for longer than ten seconds without shifting the camera or moving someone in the shot: impatience and tension are the ruling moods. The various two-shots in which Paolo confides his suspicions to Rosello, often in a club lounge, are brilliantly paired and angled to make the most of Rosello's bland impersonation of a friendly conspirator. Someone bearing the odd name, Luis Enrique Bacalov, contributed the musical score, incessant and enhancing, cool, syncopated and bright to match the fountains and the Mediterranean *dolce vita;* when the time comes, rasping and blood-red like the hue that surrounds Paolo as he has his last phone conversation with Luisa—she starkly figured in a glowing composition of black-and-creamy-white. The life of the place is *filled in,* related, implicit, as in the vignette of Luigi's father (blind, aging, cynical, sybaritic). "What color is the mountain today?" "Violet." "Yes—it always is."

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Ferzetti (Rosello) is sovereign: urbane and cool, cool, cool until cornered, when he turns Sicilian, gesturing with arms close to his body, shovelling his threats with elbows and shoulders. Leopoldo Trieste is, as ever, the perfect clown all too briefly utilized: a lawyer in Palermo, *simpatico* but evasive as a butterfly; and as a distinctly fag, antiquarian priest, Mario Scaccia is a joy. Volonte as Paolo is in his element, not even the same physical creature we have seen in other films: a flat-footed, brave young man, always in a sweat, determined but out-of-breath nervous, hugging himself, wincing, not too sure of his own courage but fearfully sure of the truth he is smelling out.

Man, led to his death by determinate causes, betrayed and unremembered: a realist in the art of film can best flatter our intelligence by assuring us firmly, without tears, that justice will seldom be done. The mountain is always violet . . . Italians don't happily make unconsoling films. They *will* themselves to tragedy; when they do so without flinching, they are unsurpassed. Petri flinched. He made *Investigation of a Citizen.*

After ten years in which Bergman, Fellini, Godard, et. al., have exhausted my toleration of the film director as his own best subject, I appreciate more than ever films about Somebody Else, where whatever personal identification inspired the film-maker's choice of story is successfully concealed by his impersonal, if artistically involved, attention to a life he has never led, a way he'll never be and a theme he has no visibly neurotic reason for imposing on an audience for whose approval he is starving. Thus, *Each to His Deserts*—and, formed by another culture, quite, Claude Chabrol's *Juste avant la nuit* (*Just Before Night*), a film that begins by queasily reminding us of *Investigation of a Citizen* (a man is murdering his mistress) only to make clear almost immediately that this is not to be a crass exercise in forensics, not at all a frontal attack on the *bourgeoisie* (a claim made for most of Chabrol's films by those using him to ride their own hobby-horse) and not even a "thriller," although it employs some of the apparatus, since the issue of the story is not the murderer's apprehension by the law but his moral survival, having escaped the law.

Mark Van Doren once wrote (in reference to *Macbeth*) that the great stories of murder were about men who could not have committed it, but who did. Charles Masson is such a man, a prosperous, married executive. He strangles his mistress, Laura, the wife of his best friend, François, in the apartment she rented for their sexual appointments. There seems to have been no other basis for their covert relationship, for even François, when the murder is disclosed, has little to say in defense of any less explicit qualifications for the sake of which Laura's life might have been spared. There *are* people who deserve to be murdered; we quickly learn to assume that Laura was one of them and that Charles killed her because it was the only way he could find to extricate himself from her domination. He

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killed her, that is to say, to escape his *own* problem, not hers! In other respects Masson is what we should agree to call, within the limits of our precarious social judgments, a thoroughly decent man. François thinks so. And so does Masson's wife, whom in fact he loves, no shadow of a doubt; that he loves his children, too, there is also no question. Preliminary investigations make clear that in police circles Charles is not even suspected. When, later on, a Mademoiselle Maillardi, who rented the flat to Laura, conveys her growing suspicions to François (she had seen Masson at the flat), he insists that she suppress her knowledge, for it is circumstantial only and might embroil his dear friend unjustly; he is personally convinced of Charles's innocence.

Hence there develops a situation which in all the refinements of detail conveys the essence of the sardonic. Masson is completely safe from the risks of detection; when he seems unduly fretful for insufficient reason, his wife, Hélène, and his best friend, far from suspecting him (or if they do, they labor to still their suspicions), do everything in their power to ease his mind. He is free to resume his existence with no penalty imposed by society, no loss of trust from his wife, his friends or from his children: exactly so, therefore, he is unable to quiet his remorse. Relief at having committed an act of murder without reprisal gives way to horror at the moral isolation he has purchased with the deed. Unable to bear his burden with a clear conscience, despite his rational justifications of the act, Charles is driven to share his self-disgust by making a confession to his wife. His first venture is cautious: he merely tells Hélène that he had indeed had an affair with Laura, which he had naturally been reluctant to admit before now because of the murder and certain questions which had arisen about Laura's visitors. This and the following sequences in the film are structured and edited with consummate art. In the first part of Charles's confession, which takes place in their opulent apartment, he is photographed in closeup against the high-lighted wall behind him, exposed, as it were, in a spotlight of his own creation, candid, agonized yet feeling his way—how much can he afford to explain?—while his wife, bracing herself to receive his confession, is seen in the shadowed area of the room, her painted lips glowing in the near-darkness of the shot. To quiet his anxiety and to seal her ready forgiveness, she proposes that they go to the sea-coast together. After a direct cut from the interior to a completely un-peopled beach where the breakers pound at the shore as if to represent the forces breaching the isolation of his soul, Masson suddenly cries out, *"I killed Laura!"*

Hélène accepts this revelation much as she accepted the previous one; she fills the wretched man's loneliness with comprehension; she accepts an experience utterly outside her ken—but not, we might venture, outside her imagining. She lets Charles talk and she mitigates his self-contempt; further, she opposes his emerging desire to

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give himself up to the police or to disturb the resignation of François with his own corroding anxiety. He absolution merely tightens the screw; the more clemency he is shown, the more acute becomes Masson's rage for punishment. Inexorably, as the season passes, he is led to the next stage of his liberation; he is compelled to lift the remaining stone from his breast by confronting François. Chabrol once again shows his special feeling for the hour, the place and the style of action in which crucial encounters take place (even in his lesser films, he is a master of *mise en scene*). Charles and François walk to the latter's home at night, Charles a few paces ahead of François, reciting his despair and guilt; François, gloomy and silent in the shadows, hangs back. This is inspired craftmanship, for if their positions had been reversed Charles might have appeared menacing and François, closer to *us* at the frontal plane of the tracking movement, would have been given an altogether false emphasis in a scene which is Masson's moment of truth.

Charles's last resort miscarries; he is shriven but not judged. François listens in sorrow and with forbearance. Like Hélène he, too, *understands;* he exhibits no sign of enmity or revulsion; he is unable to rebuke his friend nor can he concur with Charles's midnight resolve to surrender to the machinery of criminal law. Instead he advises Masson, in effect, to sleep on it, and reiterates his belief that Charles is at heart an admirable man. At the edge of his self-control, Charles takes the fragments of himself to his wife. The single alternative to public confession, bringing down a lifetime of disgrace on his children, he believes, is of course suicide, an act, he pathetically admits, he hasn't the courage for. Hélène takes the hint, so to speak. She herself administers to Charles, while he lies on his bed miserably courting the relief of unconsciousness, a lethal dosage of his customary sleeping-draught, therewith closing the case, ending the poor man's torment, sparing their children private and public shame and satisfying whatever retribution may be demanded by the scheme of things.

Running parallel to the plot I have outlined, another crime takes place, subordinate, yet pregnant with comment on the nature of the principal relationships. A bookkeeper at Charles's office, seemingly a curbed nonentity in the drab middling years of his career absconds with money from the firm with which to desert *his* wife—also for a mistress. Actually he is caught only because, in a failing moment of compassion, he sends identifiable money to his abandoned wife. Charles, to whom his partner had earlier confided suspicions of the bookkeeper, had been reluctant to press charges and refuses to believe in the man's culpability until it is made plain. (Ironically, the bookkeeper shows no gratitude for his employer's kindness; when arrested, he spits on Masson's toleration.) Inferences follow in this order: everyone is undone by mercy in which a degree of identification plays its part. François cannot bring himself to judge Charles for

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what he might have done himself, had his chemistry, let us say, been less phlegmatic. Masson can scarcely prosecute the confused bookkeeper for a crime arising from passion when he has personally committed a worse crime (worse, at least, in the interpretation of the law). Hélène forgives Charles for his infidelity and even for murder. Because he had nonetheless loved *her*? or because she suspects that if she had totally satisfied his emotional requirements there would have never been a Laura murdered?

These equivocations are the more interesting for not being voiced. We are permitted to sense them. Our presumptions are no doubt encouraged by the super-sensitive performances given by Chabrol's actors, two of them—his wife, Stephane Audran (Hélène), who has grown up under his tutelage, and Michel Bouquet (Charles)—veterans in a world of familiar faces fast becoming as constricted, in one sense alone, as the world of Bergman. Mme Chabrol is by now equally proficient as able antagonist or as the perfect foil. She never reads a line that smells of theatre: she never *reads* a line. With such insouciance that you sometimes wonder if she knows she's *in* a movie, she takes her cues from the passions usually exploding around her, responding with no histrionic affectation of "being natural." She is just her "self," no easy accomplishment for a dramatic actress while still trying to register someone else vividly. Michel Bouquet, with very little going for him in the way of photogenic assets—he is balding, far from trim and looks rather like a Boston bull terrier suffering from hypochondria—is probably the most masterful actor in Continental film today. If there is any player as versatile it must be Gian Maria Volonte or the young Cuban, Thomas Milian (inexcusably relegated to "spaghetti Westerns" in Italy), each in his own way; but no actor in Italian or French films, within my recent memory, has Bouquet's gift for living the internal stress. He can wring your heart, chill your blood or condemn himself to your condescending mirth.

Juste avant la nuit owes as much of its authenticity to Bouquet's presence as it does to Chabrol's commanding nuances, his legitimate shaping of the suspense, his solid substantiation of a social setting (a substantiation, by the way, impossible for Bergman to conceive or coerce, since no such setting is imaginable in the Swedish milieu). What one remembers, *essentially,* I think, is the lonely travail of a man shocked to death—literally—by what he finds inside himself. (An incidental murmur of surprise is unavoidable here: in a film from a mainly Catholic country there is not a syllable of professed faith or Christian doctrine. A Bresson hero would have never repented without casuistry!) We recall Masson downing his cognac in a bar after the murder; forlorn in the snow at Laura's funeral; crying aloud his sins to the sands and the waves; emptying himself to François and the impartial night and, at the end, solaced by the handclasp of his wife (the stronger of the two), on the merciful threshold of oblivion. Ultimately, the subject is Conrad's. "All a man can betray is his own conscience."

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B. H. HAGGIN

Music and Ballet Chronicle

ROMANCE, ONE OF ELIOT FELD'S THREE NEW WORKS for his American Ballet Company's spring season at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, was a setting of several more of the Brahms piano pieces he used in the first part of *Intermezzo;* and again the solemn posturings were as unsuccessful in their attempts at profound meanings as were the specimens of Brahmsian contrivance. But whereas *Intermezzo* shifted to the Brahms Waltzes Op. 39 for which Feld produced unpretentious and attractive dance invention, the solemnity in *Romance* was interrupted only a few moments by the dance to the lively C-major Intermezzo Op. 119, after which it dragged on interminably.

The Gods Amused was a setting of Debussy's *Danse Sacrée et Danse Profane*—bland music which was the basis for a progression of effortfully ingenious and mostly uninteresting movement for two girls and a boy. At the performance I saw they were the excellent Elizabeth Lee, Christine Sarry and Daniel Levins.

The successful work of the three was *Theatre*—as its title indicates, a theatrical ballet, and what could be characterized as a free fantasia on elements of Fokine's *Carnaval,* which the American Ballet Company performed a couple of years ago. Feld, that is, devised a sequence of action which began by introducing, backstage, Pierrot, Arlecchino and Colombina, the last two in strikingly pointed-up versions of their dance styles in *Carnaval,* and continued, on stage, with Arlecchino's and Colombina's teasing and mocking of Pierrot, in which they were joined by female and male groups and a grotesque Pulcinello. Feld's invention was highly effective; Frank Thompson contributed excellent costumes; and Strauss's early Burleske for piano and orchestra turned out to be surprisingly suitable music. In one performance I saw Feld was a Pierrot with more projective force than John Sowinski's in the other; Lee and Sarry were equally good Colombinas; and Edward Verso was the impressive Arlecchino both times.

Jerome Robbins, as a choreographer, "shouted greatness almost with diffidence," according to Clive Barnes; and he may actually have felt some diffidence in relation to Balanchine during his first association with the New York City Ballet twenty years ago; but nowadays he makes his claims to greatness with the outward signs of full confidence in them. These signs begin backstage with the status, privileges, attitudes and demands that one hears are those of an imperious sovereign who is deferred to at every point. And they end with the ballets eventually seen on stage, each a bigger Big Work asserting a claim to the position Mr. Barnes has declared his—that of Balanchine's successor when he eventually retires from the New York City Ballet.

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The Big Work signalling his advent in the company as a major creator, and one in which he elected to demonstrate what *he* could achieve in the format of Balanchine's *Liebeslieder Walzer,* was *Dances at a Gathering* two years ago. And now we get the ostentatiously Bigger Work of that kind, *Goldberg Variations.* The special character of the Bach music was enough to make it a formidable, awesome choice for a ballet; but Robbins's decision to choreograph it with all repeats magnified the choice into what one experienced musician thought was "an arrogant gesture." Nor was the gesture directed only at Bach: Robbins, someone remarked, evidently wanted "to out-Balanchine Balanchine" with the sheer length—80 to 90 minutes—of this new work in the *Liebeslieder* format. And he seems to have wanted in addition to show that what Balanchine did *he* could do if he chose: he devised for Susan Hendl and Anthony Blum a *pas de deux* in slow tempo that was a Balanchine-style intricate intertwining of the two closely involved bodies. With it he did show he could use this Balanchine style and produce with it one of the good pieces in his ballet; but not that he could produce something comparable with the *Pas de Deux* of *Agon,* the middle-movement *pas de deux* of *Rubies* and Concerto Op. 24 in *Episodes,* the bridal *pas de deux* of *Bugaku.*

Robbins's Balanchine-style *pas de deux* was, then, one of the occasional good things in the alternation of good and bad not only in successive Bach variations but within a single variation. As in *Dances at a Gathering* the good was the occasional successful achievement of Robbins' limited gift for dance invention; the bad the unattractive results of the attempt to transcend that limitation with a straining for novelty, and the resort to show-biz humor or pretension to profound meaning. The alternation was revealed right at the start, when the curtain rose as Gordon Boelzner was playing the first part of the Theme, and Renee Estopinal and Michael Steele, in the costumes of an eighteenth-century upper-class couple, began movements of courtly grace that went perfectly with the music, but then, as Boelzner played the second part of the Theme, the movements began to include show-biz cutenesses that got the laughs Robbins intended them to get, but that were in conflict with the unchanged style and expressive content of the music. And much worse happened shortly afterwards in two successive variations: with the first one saw leaps and spins and other such feats that went well with the Bach music as they were done by Bruce Wells in his engagingly straightforward and manly style, but which John Clifford did with excessively finicky flips of wrists and hands unrelated to anything in what one was hearing; and completely unrelated to the music of the next variation was the show-biz entertainment which offered Clifford and Wells in a humorously canonic (imitative) stretching out on their backs on the stage, raising of one leg, wriggling of its foot, turning onto their sides, leaning on their elbows and resting their heads on their palms pensively, and so on.

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On the other hand Robbins's unattractive straining to transcend the limitation of his gift for imaginative ballet invention reached a new extreme because of the increased demand on that inadequate invention by the magnitude of his "arrogant gesture"—the demand, in particular, of the long progression of florid melodic writing in slow tempo in Variation 25 that is the climax of the Bach work. Robbins devised for it a *pas de deux* in which Patricia McBride was supported by Helgi Tomasson; and seeing McBride in this climactic slow piece made one think of her long slow *pas de deux* with Jacques d'Amboise to Gershwin's *The Man I Love* in Balanchine's *Who Cares?* But whereas one was held spellbound by the unending flow of Balanchine's fascinating invention, completely spontaneous in its amazing originality—as in McBride's running to d'Amboise to be slung around his supporting shoulders and back—one shrank together in uneasy discomfort at the increasingly unattractive results of Robbins's desperate attempts at impressive and original movements (that he too recalled Balanchine's *The Man I Love* was evident when McBride ran to Tomasson to be slung around *his* shoulders). And in the end, though Robbins had struggled through the repeat of the first part of the Bach variation, he gave up and didn't attempt the repeat of the second part—to the enormous relief of those in the audience who couldn't have endured much more of the painful spectacle. I avoided reading the Clive Barnes review titled "Robbins's Genius"; but as I clipped it my eye caught the statement that Robbins "is exploring the classic pas de deux"—presumably in Variation 25. I suppose this was what Robbins *was* doing in that variation—as it was what Balanchine did in *The Man I Love;* but what must be added is that Balanchine's exploration produced its usual marvels, whereas Robbins' yielded the beauty that is only in the beholding eye of Mr. Barnes.

I know nothing about what goes on in Balanchine's mind and produces the only thing I do know—his performed work and his public actions. In contradiction to what has been said about him, these actions have exhibited an unquestionable desire to produce ballets by other choreographers, from major figures like Ashton and Tudor to the young people in his company; and Robbins in particular he welcomed twenty years ago, in appreciation of his gifts, not only as a dancer in *Bourrée Fantasque, Tyl Ulenspiegel* and *Prodigal Son,* but as the choreographer of, among other things, *Age of Anxiety, The Cage, Fanfare* and *Afternoon of a Faun.* And it is undoubtedly with Balanchine's complete willingness that Robbins operates so grandly in the New York City Ballet today. But if I say I know nothing about what is in Balanchine's mind it is because the years have made me aware of how complex that mind is; and knowledge of this complexity leads me to accept as possible one experienced observer's explanation of that willingness to have the company perform works of Robbins which I cannot believe Balanchine respects: "He is behaving as one professional to another, which in effect means he is giving him all the

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rope . . ." In that connection it was interesting to have a friend report from Saratoga Springs last summer that after *Who Cares?* the audience didn't stop applauding until the management turned on the house lights, but at a performance of *Dances at a Gathering* "we were three of many others [who] got up and left in a pause not far from the end, when all clearly was lost."

Not only did the scheduling of the six performances of the unexpected Robbins work necessitate canceling two of the four performances of Balanchine's *Who Cares?,* but the première caused a postponement of the première of Balanchine's PAMTGG which resulted in my not seeing it. But I can report concerning the earlier *Octandre* of Richard Tanner that I recall no dancing in it (nor any music in Varèse's *Octandre* and *Intégrales,* to which it was performed), but only a milling group of boys who surrounded and presumably raped a girl who strayed onto the scene, after which she delivered another girl into their hands for the same treatment; then a group of girls who drove away the boys and surrounded a boy who strayed onto the scene, after which he delivered another boy into their hands. What induced Balanchine to present this is one of the many things in his mind I don't know.

As for *Concerto for Jazz Band and Orchestra,* performed only once at the Spring Gala Benefit by Arthur Mitchell's Dance Theatre of Harlem and the New York City Ballet without its first-line soloists, and choreographed by Mitchell and Balanchine, it got its name from the very bad piece of music by Rolf Liebermann that was played by "Doc" Severinsen and "The Tonight Show" Orchestra with the New York City Ballet Orchestra under Robert Irving. One discovered that the black dancers could do ballet well but were much more exciting doing their popular-style dancing in the bang-up finale; and one was surprised first by the previously unsuspected brilliance of some of the whites in ballet, and then, in the finale, by *their* effectiveness in the popular style of the blacks, which they had evidently been watching and dancing for years.

The revival of Balanchine's *Donizetti Variations,* with lovely new costumes by Karinska, offered again the superb dancing of Edward Villella, but with him this time not Violette Verdy but Kay Mazzo, who exhibited in this work the same inability to produce the amplitude of movement required to fill out time and space effectively in slow tempo as in *Symphony in C, Diamonds* and *Don Quixote.* And this inadequacy proved especially damaging in *Swan Lake.* Jean-Pierre Bonnefous achieved two of his better performances in the third movement of *Symphony in C* and the *Pas de Deux* of *Agon* with Allegra Kent. And Susan Hendl danced with lovely fluidity and exact definition in the fourth movement of *Symphony in C* and the LeClercq role of *Divertimento No. 15.* Carol Sumner was the other outstanding girl in one performance of this work, Susan Pilarre in the second that

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I saw; and Peter Martins again exhibited—in place of what Mr. Barnes's words "overly stalwart" implied—his personal style of grace and elegance. This style, introduced into the partnering in the slow movement of *Concerto Barocco* in which all his predecessors had been impassively efficient, made it for the first time something interesting and enjoyable to watch.

John Clifford's first performances with the company three years ago, I reported, "dazzled one with his quick and sharp but contained ebullience"; but now the ebullience is no longer contained: everything he does is done all out. Even when the result in the *Melancholic Variation* of *The Four Temperaments* is to give the movements a sharply defined clarity they never had before, it is also to make them the movements of an *Energetic* rather than a *Melancholic Variation.* But at the beginning of *Agon,* when Clifford kicks harder and higher than the other three boys, he breaks through the frame of their ensemble operation; and this disruptive self-obtrusiveness is what one sees most of the times Clifford is on the stage.

Alerted by Verdy, I again attended the School of American Ballet's annual workshop performance, which this time offered parts of Bournonville's *La Sylphide,* staged by Stanley Williams, with the astoundingly gifted Nina Brzorad and Fernando Bujones in the leading roles and Wilhemina Frankfurt as one of the Sylphs; and the last act of *Raymonda,* staged by Alexandra Danilova (after Petipa and Balanchine), in which Leslie McBeth was remarkably impressive in the role Danilova used to dance.

The music of the rock opera *Tommy* was not for my ears; its words were not for my mind; and its embodiment in ballet presented by Les Grands Ballets Canadiens at the City Center was not for my eyes.

Boulez had scheduled Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* for one of his concerts with the New York Philharmonic; and by adding *Requiem Canticles* and *Petrushka* he made it a concert "In Memoriam—Igor Stravinsky." The music "after Pergolesi" for the Massine ballet *Pulcinella* was the first product of the play of Stravinsky's mind with the music of others; and one's ear confirms Robert Craft's statement that the melodies are Pergolesi's, the original forms of the pieces are sometimes unchanged, sometimes expanded or remodelled, the harmonies are recomposed by Stravinsky, though much of the time on Pergolesi's bass line, and the instrumentation is entirely Stravinsky's. The result was one of Stravinsky's most engaging scores (though for a memorial program a better choice would have been the greatest of these works representing Stravinsky's application of his powers to the music of others, and the only one comparable in quality and effect with *Petrushka* and *Le Sacre du Printemps*—the score he elaborated out of fragments of Tchaikovsky piano pieces and songs for the ballet *Le Baiser de la Fée*). To hear *Petrushka* was to marvel, from the first bar

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to the last, at what was being produced by the operation of those extraordinary powers—its impressiveness and originality merely as musical invention, its effectiveness in relation to the happenings on the stage it was devised for. And *Requiem Canticles* provided an example of what those powers produced in recent years when Stravinsky adopted the compositional techniques of Schönberg and Webern—a skillful and precise fitting together of musical sounds in a tonal construction without expressive meaning (except for the explosive sequences to the words *"Tuba mirum"* there was not a phrase in *Requiem Canticles* which had any expressive relation to the words that impelled Mozart and Verdi to their affecting writing), without even internal coherence, and without the slightest attractiveness to the ear.

Boulez produced with the Philharmonic the remarkably accurate, balanced and beautiful-sounding orchestral playing that one heard in the overwhelming performance of *Le Sacre* a couple of years ago; but his statements of *Pulcinella* and *Petrushka* this time, though effective, were less so than Stravinsky's own—missing in *Pulcinella,* for example, humorous points that Stravinsky made, and rushing its concluding Allegro ineffectively.

After this the season's concluding high point was the recital at the Metropolitan Museum of Art at which Ashkenazy performed Beethoven's Sonatas Op. 81a (*Les Adieux*), Op. 57 (*Appassionata*) and Op. 111. I have reported the increased intensity and power of his dealing with music in recent seasons; and in the *Appassionata* and Op. 111 this time he operated with a demonic intensity that was overwhelming (as against the power of this intensity, what is overwhelming in Cliburn's performance of the *Appassionata* is the power of its grandeur). It was an intensity which didn't entail the slightest loss either of conceptual grasp of the music or of the control that kept the greatest piano sonorities agreeable to the ear. And the conceptual grasp was that of someone with an unfailing sense for continuity and coherence and proportion in shape; someone, moreover, whose shaping of the music revealed thinking of his own in an occasional unusual feature. One such feature occurred in the first movement of the *Appassionata* after the opening section of the recapitulation in F minor that ended in a pause on the dominant: the *fortissimo* statement that followed proclaimed its shift to F major with a tremendous broadening of tempo that I couldn't recall having heard before. And another was the treatment of the first two variations in the slow movement of Op. 111: in the face of the directions about dynamics and tempo in the printed text that indicate a rather quiet progression which is suddenly broken in on by the *forte* of Variation 3, Ashkenazy created in the first two variations a build-up of intensity—with a steady crescendo in sonority and acceleration in tempo—to a climax in the *forte* of Variation 3. It was unquestionably not what Beethoven had in mind; but, just as unquestionably, when done with Ashkenazy's musical understanding and taste it was something one found valid and convincing.

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When the first edition of Willi Apel's *Harvard Dictionary of Music* appeared in 1944 I wrote that it was the only good book we had got from the German musicologists in this country, but that it contained an article on music criticism by one of the worst of them, Hugo Leichtentritt, whose muddled mind revealed itself to be completely without understanding of the practicing critic's operation, to be filled instead with schematizations miles removed from the realities of that operation, and to be insufficiently acquainted with the field and its literature, with the result that he was unable to evaluate the actual operation of the critics he mentioned, and didn't even mention critics as outstanding as Bernard Shaw and W. J. Turner. I published a reader's complaint that the bibliographies referred one to obscure and inaccessible European periodicals, mostly German; only later did I discover that the bibliography for Concerto included the worthless book of Veinus but not Tovey's great essay in Volume 3 of his *Essays in Musical Analysis,* and the one for Conducting included Wagner's *On Conducting* but not Berlioz's *The Orchestral Conductor.*

From what I have just said it is understandable that I began, in the new edition,[1] with the article on music criticism, and found that John Reeves White, conductor of Pro Musica Antiqua, had retained parts of Leichtentritt's article that should have been omitted with the rest, and had corrected some of Leichtentritt's errors and omissions but not others—not the omission of W. J. Turner's criticism, and not the statement that musical journalism had begun with Hanslick's writing in the Vienna *Neue Freie Presse,* when in fact Hanslick's writing had been preceded by Berlioz's in the *Journal des Débats.* As for Mr. White's additions, they included the statement "Perhaps the critic's main duty is to become involved in the strongest artistic currents, of both composition and performance, and develop a keen sense of public taste"—which indicated to me a lack of understanding of what the critic's task is and what it requires for its achievement. Though the book with the 1947 Harvard symposium, *Music and Criticism,* was included in his bibliography, Mr. White seemed either not to have read, or not to have remembered, or not to have understood E. M. Forster's definitive statement in it of the primary aim of criticism: to consider the work of art "as an object in itself, an entity, and tell us what it can about its life." In other words the critic was concerned not with "artistic currents" but with the particular object before him; he was not concerned with public taste but employed his own perception to discover the life in that object, his own judgment to evaluate it. Not understanding this, Mr. White found in Shaw's writing not the perception and judgment that made him a great critic but only "brilliant invective and enthusiasm" and the "lively style" that "still makes delightful reading." For the same reason he thought it sufficient to ascribe "great diversity of views" to the American critics he men-

1 HARVARD DICTIONARY OF MUSIC, Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged, by *Willi Apel.* The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. $20.00.

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tioned, saying nothing about the value of those views—i.e. which were, and which were not, the views of writers able to perform the critic's task of perceiving and evaluating what happened in the objects before them. And for the same reason he included many poor books (e.g. Paul Rosenfeld's *Discoveries of a Music Critic* and Max Graf's *Composer and Critic*) with the few partly good ones (*Music and Criticism* and Virgil Thomson's *The Art of Judging Music*) in his bibliography. (The bibliography for Concerto again had Veinus's book but not Tovey's essay; the one for Conducting again Wagner's treatise but not Berlioz's.)

In the new article on ballet I found that Ingrid Brainard named the famous first three Stravinsky scores for the Diaghilev company and the later *Les Noces,* but not *Pulcinella;* and that she mentioned Prokofiev's early and forgotten *Chout* but not his more consequential and enduring *Prodigal Son* for the last Diaghilev season. She had Balanchine beginning his collaboration with Stravinsky in this country with *Jeu de Cartes* in 1937 and producing with him *Agon* twenty years later, leaving unmentioned Balanchine's historic choreography for Stravinsky's *Apollo* in the Diaghilev season of 1928, and in this country his choreographing of Stravinsky scores for *Le Baiser de la Fée, Danses Concertantes, Orpheus, Movements, Variations, Rubies.* She also left unmentioned Balanchine's collaboration with Prokofiev in *Prodigal Son* and with Rieti in *Le Bal* in the last Diaghilev season, and in this country his choreographies for scores by Hindemith, Schönberg, Ives, Webern, Schuller, Xenakis and others. She mentioned Leonard Bernstein's *Fancy Free,* but didn't say it was a collaboration with Jerome Robbins, that the two had collaborated again in *Age of Anxiety,* and that Robbins had choreographed scores by Copland, Morton Gould and Stravinsky. She didn't mention the brilliant Lew Christensen collaboration with Virgil Thomson in *Filling Station,* and Ashton's collaboration with Thomson in the historic first production of *Four Saints in Three Acts.* And her bibliography, incredibly, didn't include Denby's *Looking at the Dance.*

A new article on broadcasting of music—attributed to Ross Allen of Indiana University, with revisions by William H. Cavness of WGBH, Boston—turned out to be incomplete, inaccurate and misleading. It began with the statement that "it was not until large networks were established . . . that broadcasts of serious music became available to a wide audience"—to which it failed to add that the large commercial networks which broadcast the great orchestras and the Metropolitan Opera in the thirties and forties stopped doing so years ago and offer no serious music at all today, leaving the Metropolitan to be broadcast over a Texaco ad hoc hook-up of AM and FM stations, and some of the orchestras to be broadcast live by individual stations in their cities and from tapes by a few individual stations elsewhere. Instead the article went on to speak of the broadcasts of the Sunday afternoon concerts of the New York Philharmonic as one of "the two series that

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have endured the longest and secured the most loyal group of listeners"—as though the Sunday afternoon Philharmonic broadcasts were still being heard; whereas in fact CBS had stopped broadcasting the concerts even before the Philharmonic moved them to Monday evenings a few years ago, and though for a time they continued to be broadcast live and from tapes by a few individual stations, these broadcasts also stopped two or three years ago.

So with the later statement that "since the early 1930's all the networks have made significant contributions in music performances designed especially for radio listeners," to which the article failed to add that all the contributions of this kind—the series of the NBC Symphony and NBC-TV Opera Theater, the CBS Invitation to Music, the CBS Symphony, the ABC Symphony—had ended in the late forties and early fifties. (Concerning the NBC Symphony the article did make the statement that "after Toscanini's retirement in 1954 the orchestra continued to exist for several years as the Symphony of the Air but was eventually disbanded"—which in the context of the paragraph dealing with network contributions appeared to say NBC had continued the orchestra on the air as the Symphony of the Air for several seasons before disbanding it; whereas in fact it was disbanded by NBC as soon as Toscanini retired, and tried to continue to exist on its own in the concert hall and recording studio until it had to give up the attempt.) And the large fact which the article failed to make clear was that even in the golden thirties and forties the commercial networks gave the public for the most part only the performances and repertory of the celebrated American orchestras and the Metropolitan Opera; and that even with the few additional programs of their own they didn't achieve anything comparable with the British Broadcasting Corporation's planned presentation of the entire literature of music—the entire literature of the orchestra, the string quartet and other chamber groups, the voice, the piano and other solo instruments, the less familiar music of the past, the music of today.

The article on the phonograph and recorded music by Philip Lieson Miller of the New York Public Library's Music Division in the first edition had been an informative and adequate account of developments in both until the early forties; but his account of developments since then in the second edition turned out to be incomplete. The 33⅓ RPM long-playing disc, he wrote, "made the older 78 RPM discs obsolete," but "fortunately many of the older discs have been transferred onto LP discs"—which gave the impression that the transferred recorded performances had remained available on these LP discs; whereas what he failed to add was that in a comparatively short time they had disappeared again, this time from the LP catalogues. And when he described the development and introduction of the stereo disc he failed to mention that it made the mono discs obsolete and resulted in the loss of the many superb performances on those

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discs, only a few of which had been reissued on lower-priced records. In addition, he described the advantages and disadvantages of magnetic tape in the recording process without mentioning the possibility it had offered of altering the original sound, and the most notorious examples of such electronic manipulation—RCA's monstrously falsifying "enhancements" of Toscanini's recordings. And finally there was Mr. Miller's bibliography, which began, rightly, with the Clough and Cuming *World's Encyclopedia of Recorded Music,* a useful reference work that enabled one to find out what had been recorded until 1957. With this work that went as far as 1957, the revised *Gramophone Shop Encyclopedia of Recorded Music* that stopped with 1948 lost its practical value; and presumably it was included in the bibliography merely as the first work of its kind. But then it was puzzling to find in the bibliography the obsolete 1950 record guides of David Hall and Irving Kolodin and 1956 guide of Harold Schonberg with their evaluations of records no longer available today, but not the very first book of that kind which I published in 1938, and not, on the other hand, the most recent and least obsolete book of that kind, which I published in 1967.

On the way to the article on the phonograph my eye caught the one on operetta, which stated that "during the late 1920's the sentimental operetta began to change (e.g. Jerome Kern's *Showboat,* 1927) into what is now called a 'musical comedy,' 'musical play,' or simply 'musical,' " but which failed to name any of the other outstanding examples of the genre by Kern, Vincent Youmans, the Gershwins, Rodgers and Hart, Irving Berlin and Cole Porter in the twenties and thirties. Only the Gershwin *Of Thee I Sing* and 1940 Rodgers and Hart *Pal Joey* were mentioned, as examples of the introduction of political and social satire; Porter's 1948 *Kiss Me Kate,* as an example of the more unified format devised by Rodgers in the 1943 *Oklahoma* and 1949 *South Pacific;* and Berlin's 1946 *Annie Get Your Gun,* which "continued the more traditional vein." Of later works the Frederick Loewe-Alan Jay Lerner *My Fair Lady* was mentioned, but nothing by Harold Arlen. And the bibliography didn't include the Gershwin, Kern, Rodgers and Hart, and Porter song books.

My final discovery was that Wilder Hobson, whose *American Jazz Music* offered the best introduction to the jazz heard until the Second World War, wasn't included among those whom John Wesley Work of Fisk University cited in his article as reliable chroniclers of this early period, and that Hobson's book had been removed from the bibliography in which it had been included in the first edition. What commanded Mr. Work's respect was the pretentious schematizations of Rudi Blesh, not the mere accurate perception of Hobson.

All this seems to me to add up to an inordinate amount of intellectual sloppiness in these few articles of a work of scholarship published by so eminent a press. And I won't pretend that I'm surprised by it.

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Reviews

RICHMOND LATTIMORE

Poetry Chronicle

A QUARTERLY CHRONICLE OF VERSE can scarcely be complete. The quarter brings more poetry, even more good poetry, than can be reviewed. I chose the volumes which meant the most to me, about which I found something definite, I hope, to say. I came up with three selections representing whole careers, half a dozen single volumes, and three books of translations. With one exception, I approach these in this order, which suggests itself.

Robert Fitzgerald[1] has selected poems from 1931 to 1970. I find him most characteristic in modifications of blank verse, somewhat in the manner of MacLeish (I do not imply that the verse is derivative, it is not). There are also stanzaic poems and set forms, including sonnets. Detail is constantly exquisite. There are such small touches, alone, as "the dressmaker pouting pins" or in succession, "Sea lay, quicksilver, eastward, and sail/ Perched like the white pinch of a butterfly." All is careful and well made; you will not find a bad or shoddy poem here. But how many will burst out of the page and astonish eye and sense? I tried to find one poem, any poem, different from the rest; but even "Counselors," with its enchanting scenes, lost, over its length, unity and thus meaning. Here is a whole poem, "Qui Carnem Decernit":

> Death under the fingernails is unreal. The fact
> Heaves in the blood, jammed there, cloud as it may.
> Squander warmth bitterly, it grows, choking
> Caught twigs of thought in massed passion, slowly
> Whelms thrust with sluggish weight. Keenly
> Clenching the eye push into bone wisp, see
> How thick the shadow is, teems, is prodigious,
> Stored with time. The antennae of lightning
> Search density horribly and go out.

A short poem in this style demands some kind of rhetoric, but here I lose my way from line to line. The translations show consummate artistry at all times. Is the trouble the development of theme and subject?

Howard Moss[2] in this selection drawn from half a dozen volumes gives us most of the stately compositions which have, I think, been

1 SPRING SHADE, by *Robert Fitzgerald*. New Directions. $6.50.
2 SELECTED POEMS, by *Howard Moss*. Atheneum. $6.95.

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favorites of many besides myself: "A Summer Gone," "A Balcony with Birds," "A Swimmer in the Air." Early on, he made his points through transitions unexpectedly and subtly carried out, as in these lines from "Venice":

> In yet another light, a scabrous limb of Venus,
> Dangling in rank water, rots to golden bone—
> The swank and stink of the imagination
> Beautifully gone bad.

Thus some of his best poems are scarcely logical, but dreamlike. "Front Street" proceeds almost like a meditation by Reverdy, except for more of a quality of fear, as:

> I'm sorry the sick palms look so rundown,
> That Front Street, which used to be so gay,
> Seems like the street of a plague-ridden town—
> Empty, apprehensive, dirty.
> Do not go down the steps into the boat.
> A storm is coming.
> Can't you hear the wind?

There are only a few new poems. Two of these are outstanding, the brilliant and witty satire called "Ménage à Trois," and the reminiscent "Long Island Springs," in which deeply felt emotion for once breaks to the surface. This is a master poet, though often obscure, and something of a captive to his own urbanity, lacking only raw power.

Adrienne Rich[3] has taken her title from Charles Olson—not, for me, an encouraging sign. She has forgotten or forsworn her proved craftsmanship and gone into a kind of secret reverie. All that's worth expressing is the inexpressible, these poems seem to say, and of course that is part of the glory and despair of poetry. But does not the miracle, a slightly perhaps phony miracle (see Nabokov) happen sometimes when fortunate ones come out with a unified expression even it it is not what they were striving for? There is a skilled hand making these poems, but there is also, at least much of the time, a kind of contempt for coherence. Here is one of "The Blue Ghazals":

> There are days when I seem to have nothing
> but these frayed packets, done up with rotting thread.
>
> The shortest day of the year, let it be ours.
> Let me give you something: a token for the subway.
>
> (Refuse even
> the most beloved old solutions.
>
> That dead man wrote, grief ought to reach the lips.
> You must believe I know before you can tell me.

[3] THE WILL TO CHANGE, by *Adrienne Rich*. Norton. $6.00.

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A black run through the tunnelled winter, he and she,
together, touching, yet not side by side.

Any one of the ghazals will give the striking phrases and the total incoherence. Perhaps I don't understand the ghazal? (I don't.) By the way, the single round bracket above is not a misprint, by either author or reviewer; it seems to be an affectation. On the other hand, for "Study of History," once one realizes that the image of the river, addressed as "you," is central and literal, everything works. But "Shooting Script," the last part of the book, apart from one crystalline dream of a war-film, is a frustrating mass of distinguished inconsequence. It's fairer to quote the second half of "The Photograph of the Unmade Bed":

In a flash I understand
how poems are unlike photographs

(the one saying This could be
the other This was

The image
isn't responsible

for our uses of it
It is intentionless

A long strand of dark hair
in the washbasin

is innocent and yet
such things have done harm

Once in a while, Adrienne Rich gives her reader a break. Even here, I am not hit as hard as I was meant to be.

Galway Kinnell[4] does not dream into nightmares, he heads into them frontally. The series strings on and on in non-metre; Kinnell's ear is good, but the lengths after a while cry out for more shape. We are exposed to repeated themes, such as dead hens full of eggs, bears eating flowers, babies being messily born. Kinnell can produce sufficiently revolting effects. Here is one manifestation of the hen:

I have glimpsed
by corpse-light, in the opened cadaver
of hen, the mass of tiny,
unborn eggs, each getting
tinier and yellower as it reaches back toward
the icy pulp
of what is, I have felt the zero
freeze itself around the finger dipped slowly in.

[4] THE BOOK OF NIGHTMARES, by *Galway Kinnell*. Houghton Mifflin. $4.50 ($2.95 paper).

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Or one wears shoes bought second-hand, once owned and worn by one now dead:

> And the old
> footsmells in the shoes, touched
> back to life by my footsweats, as by
> a child's kisses, rise . . .

That is a really subtle conceit and takes some doing. The revolting can be almost beautiful, as when the newborn baby is described as

> this peck
> of stunned flesh
> clotted with celestial cheesiness, glowing
> with the astral violet
> of the underlife.

Elsewhere he just piles up detail, uselessly:

> Membranes,
> effigies pressed into grass,
> mummy windings,
> desquamations,
> sags incinerated mattresses gave back to the world

and so forth. There is too much of this, and it becomes a weariness. I come out occasionally impressed, but never moved.

In a number of well-made poems, John Montague,[5] an Irishman, exploits a deliberate toughness. Sex and the sea make much of his matter. There is a brilliant account of rape, of an aged recluse hag of an old maid, by a thick-necked drunk. There is a prose parable about a dying female bird who shelters a dying male; the male then feeds on her and murders her. There is an Irish town from the point of view of a seagull, and a casting net as seen by the fish inside it. Of the sex scenes, a few are hysterical and silly, like "The Pale Light," about "The putrid fleshed woman/ Whose breath is ashes,/Hair a writhing net of snakes." I like better the contemplation of the model in a life class: as a set of sizes and proportions, as a nest of desirabilities, and as what she is, "a mild housewife/ earning pocket money/ for husband and child" with "her tired smile" seen above her imperfect and helpless charms.

Alan Stephens[6] can go on meditating almost indefinitely about trees, rocky coasts, streams and mountains, sometimes about animals, less often about people, but mostly about trees. This is no complaint. The meditations come out as strong honest poetry, never dull, though not all poems take hold and stick in the mind and eye as firmly as the best. What is best? Most characteristic, perhaps, would be the

[5] TIDES, by *John Montague*. Swallow. $5.00.
[6] TREE MEDITATION AND OTHERS, by *Alan Stephens*. Swallow. $5.00.

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"Tree Meditation" itself, set in a larger sequence but running several hundred lines about a cottonwood, its description, history, reaction to wind and weather, effect on the poet and his dreams, light tactful hints at moral significance. It is hard to extract a chunk for quotation, so here is a bit taken almost at random from "The Green Cape with Voices":

> behind a black rock that rises
> straight up out of the beach
> we encounter a collection
> of huge stumps and logs,
> each one weighing tons,
> lodged everywhichway
> (showing the strength
> of the waves: how light-seeming
> the logs would have spun
> and tumbled in end over end)

I have not even come to the end of the sentence, it goes on and on and I'll go with it. But there is one shorter poem which has to be quoted in full. It is different from the rest; the loving observation bursts into a Simonidean moral. This is all of "What I Will Think of as the White Dog Truth":

> I make out the white bulk in the dark—
> the dog approaches at a quick pace
> and goes by showing no interest in me,
> and such is the quiet of the street
> I hear the clicking of his toe-nails
> on the blacktop, quick, business-like,
> even half a block away, the sound
> growing fainter very gradually
> and already, while I keep an eye
> on the wire-thin half rim of light
> the moon shows in a sky jagged
> with trees along the bottom—
> already this encounter, the white bulk passing
> in the dark, the diminishing click
> of the toenails along the stretch
> of silence back there, cannot be forced
> not to have been, the lords of creation
> themselves will have to submit to
> its having been, if they should find it
> some day blocking the way of a desire.

Mostly, to read Frederick Buell[7] is to revel in and be swept away by the bravura of his language. This is not like Stephens' sober but

[7] THESEUS AND OTHER POEMS, by *Frederick Buell*. Ithaca House. $2.95.

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eloquent realism; I would call it an exultant surrealism, if I can borrow the term without being condemned to any school or set of connotations. Sometimes there seems to be too much virtuosity for this reader as, snowed by the shining phrases, he tries not only to find what it's all about, but just to find some place to stand still for a moment and perceive something whole. Here is one of Buell's girls (from "Once there was a Maid; and"):

It was in the afternoon that she walked among the stables.
  Between the butt-ends of voiding horses,
smacking her crop clop clop on her moony riding breech,
  circling the black pendulous
horse-ends, in a reverie of tack, or, say, in
  the afternoon meandering down avenues,
tree-gulfed, smeared over by shadows, still,
  still a-dream, between
the erections and sags of the high voltage lines,
  in love with the thin prongs
and red cups of the crocus, the mirrors of shops,
  the elegant *froideur* of the mannekins,
under the slain blue distances of the young;
  and the crowds become
a multitude of once again naive summer
  glandular creatures,
peachy, globed, bearing each a small gold escutcheon
  of juice-clot where they have ruptured,
as, on the sea-promenade's interflecked blues and
  white wave-cough and bird,

all the shells lie open, beached, and each soft clam
  gorges up its creamy prostate.
Nor does she ever show any signs of secretive guilt as
  a horse lowers his vulcanite dangle,
or at the mealy squash of a trod worm; and the sym-
  bol of the lolling water-tongue,
slain in the tip of a storm-pipe, cream-grey, no, this
  arouses only interest.

There is rather more continuity to the whole poem than would appear from this extract, which multilates it, but the quotation shows perhaps not unfairly how the poetic imagination goes tearing off at sensational tangents. There is sheer crazy genius in some of the combinations; and such views of a horse! Like most contemporary poets, Buell can scarcely tell a story. "Ariadne," the perhaps most ambitious piece, has to be scored as a gorgeous failure. We know what happened with Theseus, Ariadne, and Dionysus from combining Homer, his scholiasts, Apollodorus, Pausanias, and such literal worthies, rather than from Buell, who does retail the events but babbles pseudo-reference all

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about them in his usual disarming manner. When based in autobiography, a walk by a rather nasty stream the poet haunted in his childhood, or the passage of a ship, the images find their place and distract less. And finally, with "Insects," there is one poem completely comprehensible in all its wicked, sadistic detail: insects feeding on live aphids, as told by an insect.

What struck me at the start when I first read L. E. Sissman,[8] and again when I read him now, is his prosody. It is mostly blank verse but with occasional rhymes, irregularly spaced, and the lines endlessly, relentlessly contain exactly ten syllables in unresolved iambics. But his periods are not tailored to this precise convention. Overlap is frequent, and lines often land with a bump on some weak element. Take any poem; but a few lines of "Letter from Coast to Coast" will serve:

> War's message ends; over and out, you ride
> A Harley's pillion seat down dawn's Midway
> Behind a fellow section man, who, rapt
> In rye, noise, and discovery of hap,
> Yells, "Even the weathervanes are pointing at
> Us!" Seven: exterior, years after. New
> England engrails in green the blue car you
> Drive, laying down a screen of oil smoke.

The last line limps unless for "oil" you say "oy-il." Such faults are rare, but despite the overlap I get a sense more of stiffness than the flexibility of a Milton or Cummings. Could you, can you, do you in fact read *this* verse aloud for half an hour? But Sissman's matter interests, he has plenty to say. He has memories, scenes, stories, people, and he has the language for them. In the longish title poem, "Pursuit of Honor," Honor turns out to be a girl from the poet's postgraduate or postdropout days, pursued indeed, almost achieved, failed of at last, and I say achieve and fail of, for is she just a girl he knew or something else or more? I don't know. Sissman tells us he has worked in Tarot-card terminology, which is unfamiliar to me, and Grail-legend imagery, which is not. The girl has a father who kisses her amorously, who once spied on her skinnydipping with young friends, and therefore stutters. The Barbizon is Maiden's Castle, but it's Perceval who gets mixed up with the fair Elaine, and who was Sir Lou anyway? I'm mixed up, but I like it. Here is a sample of the narrative:

> That must be it:
> The Corbin Arms, illuminated by
> Three ravens statant noir upon a bend
> Azure; in chief, a cor argent; below,
> Natedna Realty Management. The boy

[8] PURSUIT OF HONOR, by *L. E. Sissman*. Little, Brown. $4.95.

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In his tight elevator and outsize
Cap braided "C" returns my skeptic look
And flies us slowly up to 12, where I'm
Expected or abandoned. The small brass
Knocker made like an anchor swings away
From my pursuing hand until I find
My fist just touching the low nose of an
Eccentric little man in evening dress—
White tie, top hat, and tails. The butler? "I—"
"You're Honor's friend. You're late." No servant, he.
"Come in, come in." So, Dr. Fisher, we
Are face to face at last. But not for long.

Our poet is left alone with Honor. Yes, Sir Launcelot did find a lady in Corbin Castle. Corbin also is a lock, and therefore a key.

I put Vladimir Nabokov[9] here rather than with Fitzgerald and Moss because he not only translates but brings in the theory of translation. He has collected thirty-nine poems written by himself in Russian and translated by himself into English; fourteen poems written in English; and eighteen chess problems. The book is presented in the manner of a "classic," with line numbers for the Russian poems, introduction, some notes, and a "bibliography," which is not really that but a full record of previous publication. Nabokov refuses to apologize for including the chess problems. I welcome them, but refuse to apologize for not reviewing them.

The Russian poems are, we are told, only a small selection from a much larger body. The earliest is dated 1917, the latest 1967, overlapping those composed in English. Nabokov testily deplores émigré poetry and tries not to be wistful, even pleads insincerity, but many of these pieces fail to escape a feeling of lost Russia and lost childhood, the difficulty a Russian poet forever outside Russia finds in writing poetry. Thus (from "The Paris Poem"):

in order to visit again—oh, not
commonplaces of those inclinations,
not the map of Russia, and not a lot
of nostalgic equivocations—

but, by finding congruences with the remote,
to revisit my fountainhead,
to bend and discover in my own childhood
the end of the tangled-up thread.

What of the self-translation? Here, as elsewhere, Nabokov insists on strict fidelity. With and for this, we have to put up with oddities. There are many, many inverted phrases. For instance: "To my alarm clock

[9] POEMS AND PROBLEMS, by *Vladimir Nabokov*. McGraw-Hill. $7.95.

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its lesson I set." Whatever excuses may be offered, that is a pretty awful line. Or we have:

> He who freely abandons his country
> on the heights to bewail it is free.

This is rough; it is also hard to construe. Is he free to bewail or simply free, and did he abandon his country on the heights (who was on the heights)? or is he free to bewail it on the heights? Foreign idioms and constructions can come into English and generate new dimensions and new English, as in the King James Bible, but these versions by Nabokov seem unassimilated and uncomfortable. Further, anapests, Nabokov's "beloved anapests" have a way (despite the example of Swinburne) of coming out bumpy in English. So we get, from the same poem as the last quotation ("To Russia"):

> Will you leave me alone? I implore you!
> Dusk is ghastly. Life's noises subside.
> I am helpless. And I am dying
> Of the blind touch of your whelming tide.

It's like driving on a flat. Also, as Nabokov describes the metre, "tra-tá-ta tra-tá-ta tra-tá," the lines are not really anapests, they're amphibrachs.

In most of the English-composed poems (but not in the unaccountable "Ballad of Longwood Glen"), the awkwardness vanishes. Nabokov's virtuosity in English is manifest from his prose, tiresome as that can sometimes be. "Ode to a Model" has charmed me long since, but Nabokov seems really at his best in "An Evening of Russian Poetry" as he lectures to an imaginary girls' school on the qualities of that poetry. The whole is too long to quote, but here is some of it:

> On mellow hills the Greek, as you remember,
> fashioned his alphabet from cranes in flight;
> his arrows crossed the sunset, then the night.
> Our simple skyline and a taste for timber,
> the influence of hives and conifers,
> reshaped the arrows and the borrowed birds.
> Yes, Sylvia?
> *"Why do you speak of words*
> *when all we want is knowledge nicely browned?"*
>
> Because all hangs together—shape and sound,
> heather and honey, vessel and content.
> Not only rainbows—every line is bent,
> and skulls and seeds and all good worlds are round,
> like Russian verse, like our colossal vowels:
> those painted eggs, those glossy pitcher flowers
> that swallow whole a golden bumblebee,

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those shells that hold a thimble and the sea.
Next question.

Always the one-upman, Nabokov patronizes his imaginary audience and his reader; this poem is, nevertheless, mellow, beautiful, and wise.

This chronicle concludes with consideration of three volumes of translations.[10] For Cavafy, the editors and translators of this impeccably produced volume have explained the circumstances through which a body of "new" poems became available. They have selected twenty-one, with Greek text facing the English. Without going deeply into the question of Cavafy's ultimate claims to greatness (often overstated, I believe, but always excepting "Waiting for the Barbarians") I think it is obvious that these are very good poems. Cavafy wrote clean, neat pieces decorated sparsely or not at all. The editor-translators, whose remarks on metre and diction are informed and intelligent, have "looked for a contemporary idiom that is neither so special as to seem precious nor so current as to seem temporary." The translation maintains the cleanness and neatness of the original, failing only (if it is failure) in those devilish matters of rhyme and metre. For instance: "When the Watchman Saw the Light" was written in pretty regularly five-beat rhymed couplets; "Poseidonians" in the original could be described either as free verse or irregular trochaic. In translation, the beginnings of the two poems come out as:

Winter, summer, the watchman sat there looking out
from the palace roof of the sons of Atreus.

And:

The Poseidonians had forgotten the Greek language
after so many centuries of mingling
with Tyrrhenians, Latins, and other foreigners.

They come out, that is, similar. But Cavafy, unlike many of the poets here reviewed, is always making some kind of point. So perhaps, in this case, loss of literal meaning caused by trying to reproduce the original form would have been too much of a loss.

Charles Boer has given us what is, I believe, the first complete English translation of the *Homeric Hymns* since H. G. Evelyn-White's solid and sober Loeb edition first printed in 1914; although I have heard of some other versions now in progress. The translations are faithful, in giving the general sense at least. The metre strikes me as eccentric and wilful. It falls into two main types. There is the kind that is gunsprayed all over the page. I illustrate with the opening lines of the "Hymn to the Mother of the Gods":

[10] PASSIONS AND ANCIENT DAYS, by *C. P. Cavafy*. Translated by *Edmund Keeley* and *George Savidis*. Dial. $5.00. THE HOMERIC HYMNS, translated by *Charles Boer*. Swallow. $7.50. NEGRITUDE, edited and translated by *Norman R. Shapiro*, introduction by *Wilfred Cartey*. October House. $7.50.

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Chant your hymn for me
this time,
Muse,
clearly
daughter of great Zeus

Is there some mysterious rightness about this arrangement that eludes me? I doubt it. There is also the skinny poem, exemplified by the "Hymn to Hephaistos," which begins:

The skill
of Hephaistos
is famous
do sing it
clear
Muse
he taught men
work

This is irritating enough in a short poem; in the long narrative "Hymn to Demeter" it is disastrous. The hymn to Pan reads as in the measures of Williams, that to Delian Apollo sounds at times like H. D., and though neither of these unfortunate influences may be at work, still, metre is almost the most important thing about early hexameter, and demands some form of respect. When Boer, in the "Hymn to Aphrodite," goes over to a loose four-or-five-beat blank verse, he is vastly more successful; in fact, this would be very good were it not for a few unhappy phrases, as when Anchises greets the goddess with "Hello, great lady." This almost rivals the immortal "buddy, sit thee in silence" from Smith and Miller's *Iliad;* but they say "hello" quite a lot in Boer's versions. Thus Demeter to the daughters of Celeus: "Hello/good children/of the feminine sex/whoever you are." We are also told concerning Tithonus that "there isn't/any of that old kick left in his gnarled bones." I wonder why Boer does that.

Négritude, an anthology, contains work by more than forty poets, all black, who have written in French. The quality, judging from the original, seems seldom to be low, but to be really high in only a few poets, most notably Léon Damas of French Guiana, and Léopold Sédar Senghor, president of Senegal. Each of these has an excellent ear; but their styles represent the extremes to be found in the collection. Damas is bitter and terse, finding himself ridiculous in the Frenchman's clothes and customs, but still expressing himself in stylish French rhetoric. Senghor favors the majestic rolling rhythm, the long line. There are some handsome, even touching, poems by René Depestre of Haiti and Guy Tirolien of Guadeloupe. Yet I feel some disappointment in spite of all this talent. There is too much hate and too much race. As Cartey has said in his introduction: "It is not sur-

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prising that, given the condition of blackness, the poet will reiterate the theme of exploitation and its consequences in many and various forms—slavery, hunger and poverty, the debasing of the black man's culture and the inflicting of a sense of inferiority." It certainly is not surprising, but it makes for a certain monotony of content. Senghor rises above such obsessions, but for most of these poets, Damas has said it all in a few poems.

Original and translation are on opposite pages. Since forms are free and rhyme practically non-existent, Shapiro has managed a good, honest, faithful translation. It fails only where the French seems to allow no adequate English equivalent. Virtues and shortcomings may be illustrated in the opening of a poem by Depestre, "Mon ami: voici ta Noël" ("Friend, this is your Christmas"; but shouldn't it have been "*My* Friend"?):

> La Noël du petit Jésus
> n'existe pas
> pour les mains sales
> pour les guenilles
> pour les yeux vides
> pour les regards suspendus aux pains du boulanger.

This comes out in English as:

> There is no
> Baby Jesus Christmas-time
> for dirty hands
> for tattered clothes
> for empty eyes
> for gazes hanging on the baker's loaves.

It goes well until the last line, which simply doesn't make it.

By sheer mass, by volume of representation for a body of poetry which most American readers must have heard little about, if they knew it existed, this volume is impressive and instructive.

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ROGER SALE

The Second Saddest Story

ARTHUR MIZENER BEGINS HIS IMMENSE BIOGRAPHY of Ford Madox Ford with a ten page portrait of his subject and his saddest of stories.[1] There have been two earlier biographies of Ford that have offered us the outlines of his career and some telling details, but they do not give us a Ford we can believe in, which is precisely what Mizener does at the outset. On the one hand Ford had a passionate desire to be what he was not—simple, county gentleman, public school, war hero, adherent to a code so thoroughly understood one did not have to think about it or oneself; on the other hand he had an enormous capacity to be what he was—charming, confused, immensely energetic and intelligent, an old man mad about writing. The former gave him his subjects for his books, the latter gave him the means to write them, but mostly he had to live a divided man, continually trying to bridge the gap between fantasy and fact, and his best books do not so much build the bridge as express the gap. Nothing ever worked well for Ford for very long; if he could occasionally dramatize his failure successfully in a book, mostly he had to run from it, and to invent versions of himself and his past to foist off on others, mostly women, and on to the gullible part of himself.

This opening picture of Ford, which I have put in my own terms but derived from Mizener's, is the conclusion and the distillation of a staggering amount of work. Mizener has gained access to a great deal of material hitherto unavailable, most of it provided by the four main women in Ford's life, or their descendants; he has read carefully each of Ford's eighty-one books and at least a great many of his five hundred shorter pieces, in itself no mean feat because the bulk is pretty bad; he has soaked himself in Ford's many different milieus until their details fall as blithely from him as they might have from Ford himself. As a result, the opening cameo is not only convincing but encouraging. Anyone who has read many modern literary biographies knows about the scholastic disease called documentiasis, and how few ever see their figure as well as Mizener does at the outset. Still, one finishes the opening sketch, sees how much is still to come—462 pages of text, 80 of an appendix which surveys the novels, 81 of notes—and feels that both biographer and reader have set themselves huge tasks.

As a whole, *The Saddest Story* turns out to be an achievement curiously like Ford's own: so very good when it is good, so filled with interesting things even when it is not, that one's pleasure is mixed with regret that somehow it could not be good all the time. Mizener's faults are like Ford's in at least one respect; they are such that quite unfairly they will seem to a great many readers to obscure his virtues. The

[1] THE SADDEST STORY: *A Biography of Ford Madox Ford,* by *Arthur Mizener.* World. $20.00.

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book has not thus far had a very good press, and the pity is not that the complaints are not justified but that they have been registered with a kind of finality that suggests they are the whole story. Furthermore, Mizener's virtues are like Ford's in at least one respect; they are sufficiently isolated from all that is inferior that the central achievement is there, all in one place, and not scattered and dispersed among all those pages. During one long stretch, from Chapter 13 through Chapter 20, pp. 137-277, Mizener is an almost model biographer, and a good deal of my disappointment with the rest is the result of its failure to meet the standard he achieves here. The faults can be gone into later; first we need an account of this central section.

It opens with Ford's becoming editor of *The English Review* in 1908 and the lover of Violet Hunt in 1909. Ford was in his middle thirties and had already had a considerable career. Born in a pre-Raphaelite world that had taught him to hate the arty and to assume he had to be himself an artist, Ford had been publishing books of all kinds, mostly novels, since he was nineteen. He had collaborated with Conrad on two novels and had done a great deal to help make Conrad the writer he was. He had married quite unwisely and by 1908 the erosion of his relations with his wife was nearly complete. He knew everyone in literary England, he counted himself among the great even though he had produced nothing that anyone, including himself, would call great.

The idea for *The English Review* came from a number of people who wanted to abjure commercial success and aim strictly for literary and intellectual excellence, which always is something that should be undertaken only with strong financial backing. The magazine never had that backing and so was doomed to a short life. Ford's editing was, under these circumstances, a disaster, and also superb. Ford could never manage money; worse, he wanted to imagine he was someone who didn't have to, or, failing that fantasy, someone who really had a sound business sense. So, money never being plentiful, Ford pretended, and when the pretensions collapsed he fought, sulked, and alienated his friends. Yet in the few issues he edited we find, represented by the best work each was doing at the time, the major writers of three generations: Hardy, by then practically the old guard; the Edwardians, Conrad, Bennett, Galsworthy, and Wells; the incipient moderns, Pound, Lawrence, Wyndham Lewis. In her memoir of Lawrence, Jessie Chambers describes the excitement felt by those few who knew the magazine:

> The coming of *The English Review* into our lives was an event, one of the few really first-rate things that happen now and again in a lifetime. I remember what a joy it was to get the solid, handsome journal from our local newsagent, and feel it was a link with the world of literature.

Though the magazine lasted in Ford's hands for less than two years, it had that kind of impact, the best kind.

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But quotations in *The Saddest Story* from letters by various contributors make clear that most of them felt patronizing towards Ford, as though he should be happy to be their editor, not being himself their literary equal. Ford worked terribly hard and was seldom paid more than a pittance, yet no one seems to have seen anything amiss in that. His pretense that money matters were beneath the serious consideration of literary gentlemen earned him the mockery of his contributors, who never stopped assuming they would be well paid even though the magazine was not a commercial venture. Only the young ones, Pound, Lawrence, and Jessie Chambers, seem to have known how good Ford was, and how rare such editing is. Gradually Ford's backers deserted him, and because some of them were his or his wife's relatives, the collapse of the editorship got entangled with the collapse of his marriage, and in messy ways. Ford's release, solace, and hope was to become the lover of Violet Hunt. As Dowell says in *The Good Soldier:*

> For, whatever may be said of the relation of the sexes, there is no man who loves a woman that does not desire to come to her for the renewal of his courage, for the cutting asunder of his difficulties. And that will be the mainspring of his desire for her. We are all so afraid, we are all so alone, we all so need from the outside the assurance of our worthiness to exist.

We begin to realize why this is the saddest of stories.

One of the triumphs of Mizener's book is his portrait of Violet Hunt and his careful and respectful way of showing how mad Ford was to think she was a woman who could renew his courage and cut asunder his difficulties. Mizener's way is modest and painstaking, and because it therefore relies on cumulative effect it does not lend itself well to spot quotation. But this shows something of what she was in 1908:

> This disappointment [a man who dallied but did not propose] intensified her fear that she had put off for too long settling down; she was a woman of fifty-five, "coarse and plain," as one unfriendly witness described her, "with a skin like leather," who was attempting "the difficult feat of being both spinsterish and intolerant of others, while openly living with married men." She still wanted to marry someone she could feel wildly in love with. But above all she wanted to marry; it was becoming almost an obsession with her.

Violet Hunt was brittle, high-spirited, modestly wealthy, able and eager to be a free woman for a long time. But her skin was like leather because she was suffering from syphilis, and she was aging and fading fast. She needed a safe marriage to save her, and got Ford instead. Ford liked to say that it wasn't the sex itself in an affair that mattered, but in this case the sex did lure them together and blind them to the obvious fact that neither could offer the other what each of them most needed.

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By 1914 all this was becoming clear to Ford, and he also was beginning to feel that something analogous was happening "with that part of civilization he knew best":

> These feelings had been brought into sharp focus by his personal experience in the years between the collapse of *The English Review* and his gradual recognition, in 1913, that his affair with Violet Hunt no more satisfied his "mad passion to find an ultimately satisfying woman" than his marriage to Elsie had.

The result was *The Good Soldier.* Ford said later he had been thinking about its subject for ten years, and Mizener shows how the mingling of public and private hope and disaster, how novels like *The Call* and *The New Humpty Dumpty,* reveal Ford leading up to the war and his first major work. *The Good Soldier* is a self-conscious sort of climax to the whole period—Ford himself thought it would be his valedictory—and Mizener shows how Ford, in pulling his brand from a fire seemingly gone out of control, made that self-consciousness a badge of the novel's excellence.

As an evocation of an author in a book, the chapter that follows could hardly be better. Here is Violet Hunt in the person of Florence Dowell, Ford's wife Elsie transformed into Leonora Ashburnham, Ford himself cast in his dual and divided role as hero and narrator, county gentleman and artist, Ashburnham and Dowell; here, though Mizener does not explore this possibility, is Ford's ultimately satisfying woman in the person of Nancy Rufford, destroyed, as the best in Ford's imagination so well knew, by the disasters created for her by others before she herself had a chance at life. Mizener shows—and here he needs and can rely on the patient accumulation of detail in the preceding chapters—how the book's circuitous construction, its time shifts and insistence on letting the memory impose its own form, *is* Ford in 1914, rescuing what he can of his life in the years just past. Mizener trusts fully his belief that if it happened to Ashburnham or Dowell it happened to Ford himself, and so the converse must be true and all that material at his disposal must make *The Good Soldier* clearer. And it does; Ford does not fail him; the trust is enough.

The pity is that Mizener did not trust more, in other parts of the book. I would like to concentrate on two places of some importance where it seems as though, had Mizener trusted himself as he does with the years 1908-1914 and with *The Good Soldier,* had he consistently worked at seeing Ford's work as expressive of his life, he could have made *The Saddest Story* the first-rate book it should have been. The first is the period of Ford's collaboration with Conrad, 1898-1902 or thereabouts. What Mizener offers here is pretty badly riddled with documentiasis: letters from Ford and Conrad to J. B. Pinker and Edward Garnett complaining about money or the vile treatment writers receive from publishers, reports of the domestic woes of Elsie and Jessie

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Conrad—anything but a careful consideration of Ford and Conrad together. Mizener knows that Ford's book on Conrad is very good, though not to be trusted as a record of fact, but he could have used it far more than he does as an evocation of a relationship that was in its way amazingly successful. Or Mizener could have trusted his own critical instincts more. The two began to collaborate in 1898, and the heart of their relation lies in the three ensuing years. Look at Ford's writing before and after this period and you can barely notice any change, but look at the Conrad before Ford—*Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*—and then at the Conrad after Ford—*Nostromo*, say—and the conclusion is inescapable that the collaboration played a major role in making Conrad the writer he was. The best Conrad could do before meeting Ford was the portentous effort in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* "to make you *see*." Very shortly thereafter, and during the period of his closest collaboration with Ford, he could write the magnificent first half of *Lord Jim*, one of the few first-rate things he ever wrote. It is hard not to believe that Ford, overblown pre-Raphaelite that he in many ways still was, did not contribute a great deal to this development in Conrad. The idea originally was that Ford was to help Conrad with his English, at it were. He did that, but he also helped Conrad become, in the simple sense, more intelligent. The conversations between Marlow and Jim are not, to be sure, conversations between Conrad and Ford, but they are expressive of those conversations having taken place; there is simply nothing like them in Conrad's work before he met Ford. It does not matter how strictly my intuited judgment here can be reinforced with biographical detail; it does matter that Mizener does not try to grasp this relationship and lets it float around, awash in the oceans of letters to Pinker about funds. During these chapters of *The Saddest Story* the real fun is in the footnotes, where connective tissue is not required and Mizener gives us a mine of careful listing and judicious comment. Indeed, the notes are a joy throughout; they provide extensive commentary on interesting minor people and books, and show as nothing else does that if in the main body of the text Mizener was often overwhelmed by too many documents he was also constantly aware of the problem and trying to decide at every turn what belonged where.

The second place where *The Saddest Story* misses a great opportunity to bring Ford's life and work into single focus is with the Ford of the twenties and *Parade's End*. Because he has been so good about Violet Hunt earlier, we might expect Mizener also to be good on her second major incarnation in Ford's novels as Sylvia Tietjens, and so he is. But by this time Violet Hunt was a figure in Ford's past, and the leading person in his present, Stella Bowen, is the least clearly seen of any of the major figures in the book, and this turns out to be not just an incidental limitation. The Ford Mizener creates of *The Good Soldier* years is for him the decisive Ford, and he consistently reads the Ford of 1918-1926

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in the terms he uses for 1908-1914. If one believes that *The Good Soldier* is Ford's finest and most expressive achievement, then that reading is understandable, but still not necessarily right; if one believes, as I do, that *Parade's End* is his masterpiece, then Mizener's willingness to read the later period in the terms of the earlier one seems a great weakness. *The Good Soldier* is a period novel, it has the sights and smells of the Edwardian world in every page. But *Parade's End* is both a period novel and an historical novel; in it the Edwardian world is evoked, adored, placed, then moved beyond. Valentine Wannop, Ford's image of Stella Bowen, does not do this all by herself to be sure, but she does express a kind of fullness and humanity unknown to the earlier Ford. In that fact lies the possibility that Christopher Tietjens, if not Ford himself, can find a woman to renew his courage and cut his difficulties asunder, and that in turn allows Ford an amplitude in imagining human possibilities and in seeing time and thus history released from the prison of the memory, that he had not known before.

Not knowing a tithing of what Mizener knows about the Ford of these years, one finds it difficult to go on, but the possibilities seem great indeed. Stella Bowen herself complained, lovingly one hopes, that the trouble with Valentine Wannop is that "she is so beastly normal"; the wonder of her is that she so triumphantly *is* that. This by itself is enough to make memorable the scenes on the golf course, in the horse trap, and outside the War Office in *Some Do Not . . .*, and the opening and closing sections of *A Man Could Stand Up,* where the point is that the beastly normal woman can stand up. But Valentine also affects Christopher's, and Ford's, whole sense of history and the war. Christopher in the supply depot and in the trenches, mooning about the world in which parades were possible and Herbert's sweet days were so cool, so calm, and so bright, is a period figure, ampler far than Edward Ashburnham but still a man caught in history. But Valentine is both part of his Edwardian past and part of whatever future he can envisage, and she in effect forces him out of his vanity that gentlemen say nothing and just let history destroy them. She knows her Catullus and she is one with whom one can say that some do not; as such she is part of the world destroyed by the war. But she insistently goes on living, rejects her Victorian father to the consternation of Miss Wanostrocht, and so becomes one with whom one can say one does. That is the history of it all, 1912-1926. Of course Stella Bowen is not the sole cause of all this, but she is the major ingredient in changes that were taking place in Ford, changes Mizener really does not inquire into because the possibility of that inquiry is allowed to get lost in the Sussex pigs and the *transatlantic review* and the Americanized Paris of the twenties.

All biographers want to be both full and shapely, to get everything in and to find a real place for each item, and Mizener has done

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with his great mass of material far better than most others have done with theirs. My feeling, though, is that once he got the Ford of Violet Hunt and *The Good Soldier* clear in his head he tended to ignore or slight other possibilities and to let his loosely woven fabric of details drape around that central figure. The pity in the first instance is that even this is not going to be clear to many readers; the pity in the second instance is that so much more could have been done. Which is why this is just about the second saddest story.

Finally, let me offer, this time quite tentatively, one last sense of an opportunity that it seems to me Mizener missed. It seems never to have occured to him during the performing of his long task that some essential revaluation of Ford's achievement is in order. By this I do not mean a different description of Ford's best, next best, or worst books; Mizener's description of the books when taken one by one seems at least good enough. Rather, I mean a different sense of how good he was at his best. Perhaps Mizener felt that that job, if indeed it needed doing at all, properly belonged to someone else, but I think the biography itself could have been made better had it made such a reassessment. For instance, late in 1923 Ford, then editing the *transatlantic review,* tried to undertake a renewal of his old relations with Conrad. Conrad, however, not liking Ford's having reprinted their minor collaboration, *The Nature of a Crime,* in the *transatlantic,* and, so it would seem, not liking Ford himself much, acted condescendingly to Ford. Conrad, after all, was knee deep in collected editions of his work, and Ford, who wanted terribly to have just one such edition of his, had nothing of the kind to show. That, or something like that, was for Conrad proof that he had earned his condescension. Mizener sees no irony in all this, and engrossed as he is in the silly things Ford was doing, one knows why. The world had come to accept Conrad as a better writer than Ford, as it still does, and Mizener does not feel any need to inquire into the rightness of the judgment.

But I think he should have. Conrad, even at his occasional best, has been overrated, while Ford, at his more frequent but still very occasional best, has been underrated. Furthermore, in 1923 Ford was at the height of his powers, embarked on the great Tietjens books, while Conrad had his best work twenty years behind him. No matter how many foolish things Ford was doing, the essential fact of the greatness of *Parade's End* needs better recording. And it is not only in comparison with Conrad that this judgment seems both possible and important. Let me at least suggest this: beside *Parade's End* a novel like *A Passage to India* seems an attempt to make a major book out of minor material, *Jude the Obscure* seems an interesting muddle, *l'Education sentimentale*—which Ford himself loved so much—becomes a tempest in a teapot, even a fully accepted classic like *Ulysses* seems to have been written in a laboratory. I am not saying these judgments

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are correct, only that they are not radically out of the question. Of the English fiction of the last hundred years, only Lawrence's three great novels seem clearly superior to Ford's; there a writer is doing all Ford can do in the way of showing how life's ways are history's ways, and something else and something more as well.

But even Lawrence cannot efface Ford. Rereading *Parade's End* is a practically unique reminder of a novelist's resources when he is both superbly intelligent and saturated with the lives he is imagining. Ford's softness, his great willingness to identify with Tietjens and especially with Tietjens' unwillingness to try to save himself, which is the work's one glaring defect, is for one who knows Ford's life an evocation of life's possibilities for art, though it is a real defect nonetheless. But give Ford that, concede him this large single weakness, and he can do anything, almost. Few moments even in Lawrence are more responsive to the relation of landscape to human consciousness than Tietjens' watching the skylarks over the trenches; no one except Tolstoi or Chekhov can make the beastly normal as winning as Ford makes Valentine Wannop, as she lives through and then remembers in scene after different scene how much she wanted Christopher to kiss her that night in the horse trap; if Ford was limited as a writer about war because he knew very little about actual fighting in the trenches, he is unerringly good in his descriptions of the muddle of war and its inevitable toll in psychic dislocation and subsequent torment. Without this book there would be many things we simply would not know.

The pity is that one cannot claim that for *The Saddest Story*. The possibilities were there—a great tale to tell and a careful critical intelligence to tell it. It seems churlish, given all that Mizener has done, to have asked for more and even for a different kind of more, but Ford deserved it. Having winnowed and won through all that material, all that evidence of the mess that Ford made of his life, Mizener could give his Ford the biographically central position it required. But after that he settled for writing judicious pages about trash like *A Rash Act* and *The Marsden Case,* and I am convinced he would have better spent his time had he moved back and away from his tons of material and his central portrait and then asked who writes better than Ford at his best.

"Yes, yes, but is that *all*," Henry James complains about Arnold Bennett, and one is finally left with that thought about Mizener on Ford. It isn't all, not yet anyway.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

Paracriticism: Its Cause and Cure

SUCH TITLES[1] SUGGEST EPIC POEMS or freshman anthologies; if you like the titles, you'll love the books. Ihab Hassan is a bibliophagous academic with an awesome card-file, a style like wet pastry, and evidently unlimited intellectual ambitions. As Director of the Wesleyan Center for the Humanities in 1969-70, he gathered the company of seers (himself included) whose essays, published now in *Liberations,* tend to confuse the fustian of the humanities with the future of humanity. As author of *The Dismemberment of Orpheus,* a disaster area that he shares only with plot-synopses and numberless authorities, he takes every opportunity to wring the neck of the Absolute:

> Art, language, and consciousness may seek transcendence in a state that we can evoke, anagogically, in the plenum of silence. But art, language, and consciousness may also seek to empty themselves as man recoils into a pure intuition of his subjectivity, recoils into a negative state of silence. "When God and the creation become objects of consciousness," J. Hillis Miller says, "man becomes a nihilist. Nihilism is the nothing of consciousness when consciousness becomes the foundation of everything."[2] Thus transcendence moves downward. Playing their stringless lyre, modern authors enchant us with their twin melodies, and we dream of bright life or unspeakable sleep.

Thus, playing his stringless lyre to escape the imposture of the merely human, Hassan concludes an early section of *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* on a note of unintelligible platitude. It's a schematic device, this lyrical sentence at the very end of a section; at each pause in what might be called his argument, he punctuates the plenum of silence with an abrupt little Parthian fart, signalizing that yet again he has come to the end of our patience: "Wide-eyed and bodiless, Orpheus glares at the sun, waiting eternally for night"; "Naked, Orpheus enters the great, empty spaces of violence"; "We may even learn to enter, through . . . [Kafka's] words, into an Orphic trance, looking onto the enormous calm of existence"; "Dismembered, Orpheus returns to the objects he once moved, the limbs of his own body, to retrieve his consciousness, a guilty song"; "Meanwhile, Orpheus and Narcissus embrace in a black pool"; "Such silence—Orpheus of the severed head—

[1] THE DISMEMBERMENT OF ORPHEUS, by *Ihab Hassan.* Oxford University. $8.50. LIBERATIONS, edited by *Ihab Hassan.* Wesleyan University. $10.00.

[2] Miller too is quite a kidder, as Hassan emphasizes by quoting another zany Millerism later on: "Though writing is the only action which escapes the imposture of the merely human, at the same time all literature is necessarily a sham. It captures in its subtle pages not the reality of the darkness but its verbal image." Miller may mean that books are different from solar eclipses.

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speaks not only of vanishing things: it must also sing, on pain of universal stillness, of a new kind of love."

Hassan goes so far as to break into blank verse—"The tension of the void bestills his art"—but poetry isn't enough: not content to sound like an accurate translation of any minor French poet, he succeeds in sounding like a French critic besides. "All recognize that death compounds the futility of human life in a universe without pre-established norms." "Thus the imagination finally reflects upon itself the nullity of the human condition." "Kafka transforms his prayers into ambiguous fictions. Therein lies the authority of his art." "Images of doom can unlock the doors of destiny." "Its art radically disturbs the categories of our thought and carries us to the threshold of despair. . . . Yet the art of *The Castle* carries us also beyond despair . . . so that the true quest may be seen at last: a quest for questlessness." And look, O bug-eyed and incredulous decapitee, where thy servant Ihab capers at the zenith of his folly: "The image of 'The Hole,' that feminine and obscene 'appeal to being' in Sartre's work, vividly reminds us of the terrifying contingencies of the self."

Hassan is, of course, the literary exhibitionist's ideal patsy: "Breton can . . . say without self-contradiction: 'The simplest Surrealist act consists of dashing down into the street, pistol in hand, and firing blindly, as fast as you can pull the trigger, into the crowd. . . . The justification of such an act is, to my mind, in no way incompatible with the belief in that gleam of light that Surrealism seeks to detect deep within us.' " Whereupon Hassan, in the rôle of horse's ass to Breton's pistol-packing Lady Godiva, comments: "The act is not morally simple; its simplicity is formal. As an expression of disgust, it compels us to focus on the point where chance and necessity, dream and act, irrevocably meet."

One is tempted to blame the French. Anybody unstable enough to read as much aesthetics and literary history as Hassan does is bound to be affected sooner or later by the French weakness for confounding all genres into slogans and showmanship, salon conversation. Hassan loves to display his masters, often in the moment of doing their tricks: Breton ("Poetry is the opposite of literature"); Butor (". . . all real transformations in the form of the novel, all fruitful investigations in that domain, can only take place within a transformation of the idea of the novel itself"); Sartre ("For a long time, I took my pen for a sword; I know now we're powerless"); Camus ("The whole art of Kafka consists in forcing the reader to reread"); Apollinaire ("The poets wish to master prophecy, that spirited mare that has never been tamed"). The answer to such galvanic twitches is almost anything Hassan happens to cite from Kafka ("What will be my fate as a writer is very simple. My talent for portraying my dreamlike inner life has thrust all other matters into the background; my life has dwindled dreadfully, nor will it cease to dwindle") or Beckett:

The fact would seem to be, if in my situation one may speak of facts,

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> not only that I shall have to speak of things of which I cannot speak, but also, which is even more interesting, but also that I, which is if possible even more interesting, that I shall have to, I forget, no matter.

But Hassan can't begin to imagine the differences between the paradoxes of the salon and the paradoxes of consciousness.

As for *Liberations,* it's unreasonable to expect much from what amounts to a collection of conference papers; but Hassan doesn't help with his hyperthyroid Preface, in which among other fantasies he sees his own essay ("Fiction and Future: An Extravaganza for Voice and Tape") as an "experiment" in "a kind of writing" he calls "Paracriticism." The essay reads like the hallucination of an English major who has just been tested for new glasses: in a stretch of three pages Hassan ranges from neutrinos through supernovas, pulsars, and "black holes" all the way to "four categories of fiction since 1945." The essay isn't so special as he thinks: Hassan is always writing paracriticism, as when in the Preface he congratulates one member of his team, John Cage, for putting "the immense generosity of creation in the random form to which it is entitled."

Cage, whose piece despite this sendoff is mild and dull, uses a variety of sizes, faces, intensities, and line-arrangements of type to acknowledge his indebtedness to Buckminster Fuller for any ideas he may be expressing, as well as to reveal some private feelings about mushrooms (the smell of which he likes on his clothes because it attracts cats and dogs), telephones, and the Virgin Mary—

> Function fulfilled by
> images of the Virgin Mary along a path
> is now also fulfilled by the public
> telephone. Instead of lighting a
> candle, we insert a dime and dial.

Several of the essays appear to have been written during the scary academic spring of 1970, and a lot of agonizing goes on regarding irreversible changes in the consciousness of everybody, ineluctable portents, and the meaning of it all. Frank Kermode, a visitor from Britain, concludes that, "living with the revolution," "we ought cheerfully to resign our institutional powers" (administration? hiring and firing of faculty? classroom authority? curriculum? grading?), though "teachers must teach. They can explain—they ought to explain—that they are using disciplinary matrices to which there are possible alternatives. They must, in the humanities at any rate, explain that survival depends on the effectiveness of the dialogue between teachers and taught who are alike ready to question anything and to refrain from authoritarian assertiveness" and so on and on. How these desperate plagiarisms from any educationist manual accord with "resigning our institutional powers" and "living with revolution," Kermode didn't bother to work out while he sat waiting for Godot or the National Guard.

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David Daiches takes the orthodox bookworm stance, duly quotes Shakespeare's Ulysses on "degree," dares to celebrate both "the free and disturbing imagination of the artist" and the virtues of "the bourgeois intellectual," and arrives at the heart-warming disclosure that "it is the great novelists, dramatists and poets who have most to tell us about the true facts [rather than the false misrepresentations] of the human condition." Michael Wolff (again with bows to Fuller) calls on the humanities for total commitment to "the Long Revolution" and "the humanization of mankind." Hayden White proposes "an art, science, and philosophy that are engaged, relevant, or, more generally, 'socially responsible.' . . . The rise of a mass audience for both art and thought, an audience that is greater in numbers and power than anything previously known to historical experience, an audience created by mass education and sustained by mass media, has created a demand for a new kind of culture. . . ." Richard Poirier, who is nothing if not engaged, relevant, and socially responsible, brings to our attention "the limits of art" and, claiming the pop scene for the mud-colored lingo of social science, describes the Altamont festival as "a betrayal of a history whose central event, elevated to the status of a myth, was the Woodstock festival." Daniel Stern finds a way of associating Aquinas, Hiroshima, and Auschwitz in two consecutive sentences and asks: "Who is Man, really?" Leslie Fiedler, ever the madcap dissenter, has rediscovered Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and "the fluidity of song": "Our world" is "hungry for rhyme and sentimentality"; "Longfellow is capable of redeeming us"; "Such a prospect means for me personally a deliverance from a bondage too long self-imposed, from that Terror to which I have submitted proudly, *learned* to submit, persuaded that such enslavement represents final wisdom. In my fifty-third year, however, I feel free at last to evoke in public the kinds of poems which I have never ceased to love. . . ." (If you wonder how such stuff translates into paracriticism, here's the unembarrassable paracritic pumping away in the Preface: "Leslie Fiedler anticipates a revolution in poetry that popular culture has always concealed. Taking risks with the canons of High Art, he proposes an alternative line of verse, harking back to Longfellow and [Stephen] Foster, closer to the ungoverned soul of men.")

Fiedler ought to have debated with Louis Mink, who, taking the opposite and equal chic position, reports that "As far as aesthetics is concerned, the revolution is over": "the concept of beauty has disappeared," and art, liberated from the "solemn pronouncements of judicial criticism," moves "into the unmapped territory of found objects." The thesis isn't new. Back in 1944 Virgil Thomson (who can be a serious man when he doesn't feel obliged to parade his up-to-dateness) presented the chic view of the triumph of "modern music": "The estimate of how much modernism, and in what degree of dilution, a given audience will take at a given time is purely a consideration of practicability. Few real disputes about aesthetics have been active since the modernists came into command of all the positions of intellectual

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eminence by winning, a full generation ago, all the chief arguments about aesthetics. That is why open compromises on practical policy are possible today without any loss of dignity to anybody. . . ." To which the always unfashionable B. H. Haggin retorted:

> What victories and so on those portentous-sounding words and phrases refer to I don't know; but the general music-loving public doesn't even care: it dislikes the music, and therefore objects to hearing it; being as strongly entrenched in the concert hall as the modernists are in the music schools and colleges, it can make its objection effective; and no amount of verbal abracadabra about its having lost the esthetic battle and about compromises without loss of dignity will fool it into doing anything else.

(Abracadabra, however, is the hydra-headed monster of the age of publicity. In a recent radio interview a magazine editor recalled a conversation he had had with Marshall McLuhan. "Any book ever written," said McLuhan, "can be boiled down to a single printed page." The editor was shocked: "The Bible? *War and Peace?*" *"War and Peace,"* roared Abracadabra, "can be boiled down to *half* a printed page!" Blackout and uncertain laughter, though if the master of put-on and put-down had been in top form the book he noticed in the last sentence would have been the Bible. As with Fiedler, Mink, and Thomson, the chutzpah is the message.)

The important writers in *Liberations* are Buckminster Fuller and Harold Rosenberg. Rosenberg's contribution, "Politics of Illusion," must be one of the best political essays in the world. It's a marvelously alert, complex, sympathetic meditation on *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon,* Marx's analysis of the second Napoleon's rise to power: on the book's historical circumstances, on its finally un-Marxian character ("Marx could have used his findings in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* to disprove his theory that the class struggle can be relied on as the motor of history"), on its prophetic and unintended applicability to twentieth-century politics. The entire argument, Rosenberg's as well as Marx's, is in Marx's introductory aphorism:

> In his account of the coup d'etat of Louis Bonaparte, Marx introduced aesthetic categories. "All great world-historical facts and personages," he began, quoting Hegel, "occur, as it were, twice"; then he added, "the first time as tragedy, the second as farce." Louis, Marx set out to demonstrate, was a caricature of Napoleon Bonaparte, and his seizure of power in 1851 a parody of Napoleon's coup half a century earlier. . . .

What Marx demonstrates is the bohemian and virtually classless nature of Louis' constituency: "Complementing the Paris Bohemians were the small peasants, for Marx a rural *lumpenproletariat* bypassed by capitalism, who, though they share common economic and cultural characteristics 'do not form a class.' . . . In addition, there were the bureaucracy, swelled out by Louis as an 'artificial caste' existing

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'alongside the actual classes of society,' and the army, no longer as in the days of Napoleon 'the flower of the peasant youth' but 'the swamp-flower of the peasant *lumpenproletariat.*' These static and unproductive human aggregations constitute the social reality behind the Napoleonic idea of grandeur. . . ." But Marx could not take the next step in the argument:

> Unfortunately, it was not consistent with Marx's class theory of history to take the *lumpenproletariat* seriously. . . . He understood the farce of the bohemian emperor and that in real life farce can be deadly. But he could think of Louis' coup only as a temporary deviation from real history; he could not conceive the farcical dictatorship of the nonclass King Ubu as a recurrent condition with which man might have to deal. *The Eighteenth Brumaire* proposes no prescription for coping with this type of political crisis, nor any theory as to the likely effects of the adventurer's victory. "All great world-historical facts and personages occur, as it were, twice, the first time as tragedy, the second as farce." But why twice? Why not three times? Four? Five? An indefinite series?

Rosenberg, having himself taken the next step in the argument, proceeds to take all the steps after that; and he ends by certifying the place of our own epoch in the apparently unbreakable indefinite series of "spurious" political events, "false appearances," "aimless adventures," "frenzies of motion without direction." The "politics of illusion has become an illusion of politics. Marx goes so far as to speak of 'history without events.' "

It's the kind of history that Fuller would prefer, though he doesn't usually stop to think of history except as the bad past. Fuller is a problem because to some very intelligent people, including Rosenberg, he looks like another of the flat-headed fauna of the age of publicity: "To Buckminster Fuller, the living conditions of the astronaut are the first instance in human history of totally regulated space occupancy, and to him the astronaut's cabin provides the ultimate model for planned utilization of the world's resources. (Fuller seems to neglect the dungeon as an earlier organization of space to control living.)"[3] Rosenberg is an extraordinary man, witty, impatient, lucid, the outstanding cultural critic of the time, a sustained and powerful thinker, the only humanist and intellectual in Hassan's silly (except for Rosenberg and Fuller) anthology. On the other hand Fuller, as he himself insists, is an ordinary man, indeed the apotheosis of ordinariness: earnest, inquisitive, decent, humorless, accommodating (Leopold Bloom); fascinated by objects, methods, instruments, by economy and distribution, by all the mysterious macro-movements of human life on earth, by the notion of reversing the entropy of things, by the loaves-and-fishes miracle of "more with less"; so delighted by the unobstructed concentration on means in an astronaut's cabin that (if ambiguities ever

[3] Harold Rosenberg, *Artworks and Packages* (Horizon Press, 1969), p. 139.

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interest him at all) the ambiguity of "regulate" or "control" would never in this instance even occur to him. There are no nuances in his world, perhaps no precisely identifiable individual persons either: he speculates on the largest and most innocent scale, as if evil were a dream of the past and nobody wanted anything beyond what technology, properly comprehended, can already offer:

> . . . we can scientifically assume that by the 21st Century either humanity will not be living aboard Spaceship Earth, or, if approximately our present numbers as yet remain aboard, that they then will have recognized and organized themselves to realize effectively the fact that humanity can afford to do anything it needs and wishes to do and that it cannot afford anything else.
>
> As a consequence, Earth-planet based humanity will be physically and economically successful and individually free in the most important sense. While all enjoy total Earth, no human will be interfering with the other and none will be profiting at the expense of the other. Humans will be free in the sense that 99.9 per cent of their waking hours will be freely investible at their own discretion. They will be free in the sense that they will not struggle for survival on a "you" or "me" basis and will therefore be able to trust one another and be free to cooperate in spontaneous and logical ways.

For those who keep bringing up politics,

> The doing-more-with-less effort cannot be attributed to any political doctrine. Political doctrine undertakes only to do more with more—more security with higher, thicker and heavier walls—more and bigger guns—more and more soldiers who only consume rather than produce and conserve wealth. Fall-out of the ever-more-capability with ever-less-expenditure-of-effort,-time-and-material-per-inch-unit of performance came primarily from the sea, air and space support industries. . . .

This is how Fuller writes and talks all the time everywhere, over and over and over again, as if truth is accomplished by an indefinite series of reiterations of the heretofore unexamined obvious ("the shift from wire to wireless communication systems wherein one telstar satellite weighing only one-quarter of a ton out-performs, and in due course displaces, the trans-oceanic cables systems weighing hundreds of thousands of tons and handling the same number of messages in an inferior way"), in an idiom made up of thousands of invariant print-outs, as incontestable and unreverberant as factory instructions for assembling an electronic mousetrap. Fuller denies politics explicitly, art and style inadvertently; most imperturbable of Pelagians, he has invented a new vocabulary for denying sin and evil ("integrity is innate and has been frustrated in the past only postnatally"); he denies history and fate. The Western intellectual, brought up on art, politics, style, and the Judeo-Christian nightmare of history, cannot fail to be appalled by such a prodigy of reckless kindliness.

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J. MITCHELL MORSE

Fiction Chronicle

I. *Conversations at Midnight*

ON ONE POINT THERE IS NO FURTHER NEED for mere conjecture. The philological Muse has revealed to me what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women. "Just call me Lover Boy," he said. But our Muse, remembering Patroclus, gently reminds us of Achilles' versatility; and it occurs to me that the slogan of our sexual revolution—*"A bas la différence!"*—is perhaps less new than merely novel. There is a story to the effect that the Empress Catherine the Great was crushed to death by a horse with whom she was copulating; but the story seems improbable, because most probably it was she who crushed the horse, with her powerful grip. She wasn't called the Great for nothing. In our various ways we are all highly sexed, especially between the ages of five and ninety-five. So what else should writers write about? There are, to be sure, other subjects, but none of such unquestionably universal interest as love and the sexy motions.

Since a smooth course would present few opportunities to develop dramatic tension, writers of fiction from Homer onward have been attracted to the difficulties and derangements—and shall I say the infirmities?—of love. But many of our contemporary novelists seem to be fascinated by a terrible venereal disease for which they themselves are responsible: logorrhea. Their poor distracted characters lie in bed—if and when they do go to bed—and talk, talk, talk. And such talk! The World's Great High School Debates! The World's Great College Bull Sessions! Great East Village Raps! Great Ideas of Western Man! Favorite Midnight Conversations of the American People! It's almost enough to make you sympathize with D. H. Lawrence.

With all that purposeful thinking going on, love and the art of fiction are poorly served by most of the books lined up before me, their jackets bright as cereal boxes in the A. & P. If I didn't have to review them I could and would take the still sound advice of old Anatole France: "Let us be lovers of books and let us read them: but let us not gather them with indiscriminate hands: let us be delicate: let us choose; and, like that lord in one of Shakespeare's comedies, let us say to our bookseller, 'I would that they be well bound and that they speak of love.'" Given the large size and large numbers of current editions, we are indifferently satisfied now with merely competent bindings, and don't distress our hearts grieving for the lost visual and tactile pleasures of hand-tooled leather; but there is no good reason

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whatever for us to be satisfied, much less pleased, with merely competent prose. The damned books on my left, which I shall discuss in this section, have in fact survived a process of choosing; none is illiterate, none is incompetent, none belongs by nature in the limbo of the undiscussable; but there has been enough technical brilliance in our century to give us high standards, and I for one find little pleasure in ordinary performances. It may well be that in every city of any size there are people who play the violin pretty well; but when we go to a concert or buy a record we want the violinist to play better than pretty well. Likewise with writers. Since they invite public attention to their performances, since they offer their books for sale, since thereby they profess to be professionals, let them write better than pretty well. Let them write brilliantly. After the brilliance of Biely, Rilke, Proust, Joyce, Kafka and Faulkner, and with such brilliant performers now as Beckett, Grass, Weiss, Butor, Sarraute, Pinget, Robbe-Grillet, Borges, Landolfi and Nabokov, how can we thrill to the tame prose, inoffensive wisdom, unarmed satire, stage characters and predictable situations of the authors listed in the footnote below?[1]

James Leo Herlihy, whose undistinguished novel *Midnight Cowboy* was the basis of an excellent movie, quite evidently intends a comparable success for *The Season of the Witch;* but as a novel it is a sad example of how art can be talked to death. The season is short enough—September 2 through November 14, 1969—and its events are recorded in short takes in a seventeen-year-old girl's diary; but her profundities soon cease to be amusing, and by November 14 they have become so tedious that we are surprised to see how little time has gone by. The girl is stupid, dishonest and naively obedient to the conventions of the consciously unconventional, but she keeps congratulating herself on her insight, honesty and freedom, and surrounds herself with people who, sharing the same conventions, are as incapable of undeceiving her as she is of undeceiving them. The diary of such a person, conceived as fiction by an undeluded author, could be wonderfully revealing, as the monologue of Jean-Baptiste Clamence is revealing; but Herlihy (yes and no, off and on—whenever the temptation to be profound overcomes his realization that he is writing a novel) seems to share the dumb kid's deluded view of herself, and also to join her in the widely accepted delusion that the only alternative to the Clairol-McDonald's-Chasemanhattan-Desilu culture is the Ginsberg-Reich-Leary-Kesey culture: that the only alternative to writing TV commercials or joining the White House staff is to drop out of society.

John McFadden, skinny pimply homosexual son of a busy Belle Woods, Mich., psychiatrist who has no time for him except by appointment, takes refuge in pot, LSD, astrology, the Tarot cards and

[1] THE SEASON OF THE WITCH, by *James Leo Herlihy*. Simon & Schuster. $6.95. BIRDS OF AMERICA, by *Mary McCarthy*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $6.95. LOVE IN THE RUINS, by *Walter Percy*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $7.95. A JOURNEY TO SAHALIN, by *James McConkey*. Coward, McCann & Geoghegan. $6.95.

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the notion that everbody is God. Gloria Random, neurotic daughter of an uptight Belle Woods stockbroker and a flighty hair-dyeing women's-club-musical-comedy star, takes refuge in pot, LSD, astrology, the Tarot cards and the notion that everybody is God. Naturally, this Peter Pan and this Tinker Bell are drawn to each other:

> The first time we took LSD together, we observed our relationship. It couldn't be simpler: He's my guru, I'm his earth mother. Which means I'll be walking out of here tomorrow not in bondage but with a beautiful soul companion. No compromises, no strings, no bullshit, just two free souls (both Pisces!) dedicated to one another's purity and freedom, embarking together on their journey into reality.
>
> Reality. Wow. And to think it starts *tomorrow!* If I weren't just faintly stoned, I'd probably faint and turn to stone.
>
> . . .
>
> Unfortunately we don't turn each other on sexually, not even when we're lying around naked together. I suppose that's just as well. No sex, no hangups. I shouldn't phrase it so negatively though, because the thing we have together is wildly positive. Between the two of us there's this colossal flow of soul energy that keeps us both super-UP, and we're both totally committed to the belief that we must as a matter of conscience stay high as much of the time as possible.

Bravo! So far so good, and promising, promising. But the promise peters out and breaks down under a load of messages that get heavier and heavier. John, having been ordered by his draft board to report for induction in three weeks, decides to go underground in New York. Gloria, having learned from a malicious uncle that her real father was a Polish Jewish refugee history professor named Hank Glyczwycz, decides to go with John and try to find Hank. John changes his name to Roy; Gloria, who likes to think of herself as a good witch, fools around with "Glyczwycz" for a few minutes and gives herself the name Witch Gliz. "Far out!" says Roy. The adventures of these unimaginative innocents involve a great deal of physical action and many obviously filmable incidents: dickering with drug pushers, robbery at knife-point, slapping around and homosexual molestation in a vacant apartment by a pair of policemen, a variety of other sexual encounters pleasant and unpleasant, ceremonies of mystic love in a communal "family" of Peer Gynt trolls presided over by a nutty psychiatrist turned guru and one of his ex-patients turned earth mother, the death of a homosexual junkie, visits to Hank's class and to Hank's farm on Staten Island, a night drive by family bus to Toronto, scenes of the American C.O. community in Yorkville, Ont., a hitch back to Belle Woods, Mich., where Mom has just divorced the brokerage firm and had her face lifted, and Witch's decision, sitting on the old seesaw, to seek reality again pretty soon.

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Witch is just as stupid on the last page as on the first, and it seems fairly clear that that is the chief impression Herlihy wants to give us; but for long stretches he forgets and has her write better than she possibly could, with insights she couldn't possibly have, and with a vocabulary far beyond the basic hippyese in which such a dumb chick thinks—a simple jargon in which the word "head," for example, doing duty indifferently for "mind," "soul," "thought," "thoughts," "idea," "ideas," "opinion," "opinions," "belief," "point of view," "attitude," "personality" and "character," makes impossible whatever clarity of thought depends on distinctions, definitions, precisions. On the other hand, many of the heaviest discussions are conducted in basic hippyese, and Herlihy steers them to their grand conclusions with such evident sympathy that he seems to have abandoned the role of novelist for that of guru. It's too bad. The beginning is amusing farce, and the first 96 pages are generally good. The last forty pages also are generally good, and the last two flash again with the humor of the beginning. But pages 97 to 343, devoted largely to life in the commune, sag with the weight of heavy thinking by minds too undeveloped or too drug-blasted to sustain it; and I'm afraid a case could be made for the view that Herlihy regards that nutty psychiatrist as a holy man with a message that could save the world. As if we hadn't had enough saviors.

A much more appealing adolescent is Peter Levi, hero of Mary McCarthy's *Birds of America,* whom we follow through two Summers with his mother in Rocky Port, Mass., a year on his own as a student in Paris, and a side trip to Rome. He is intelligent, articulate, skeptical, tactful, self-respecting, considerate, compassionate and courageous. He doesn't assert himself gratuitously, but when action is called for he acts, without bombast or obscenity of self-congratulation, and without thought of his personal comfort or convenience or of the damage it may do his reputation among those for whom comfort and convenience are the highest goods. He has what his favorite philosopher, Kant, would have called dignity. In this respect he is entirely credible, not only as a recognizable ideal but as a recognizable person like several I know and several others I have known. But he is almost incredibly undersexed. For a healthy boy between the ages of fifteen and nineteen to have so little interest in girls, to be so nearly a disembodied aesthetic and moral sensibility, is not absolutely unknown, but it is statistically so rare as to make us curious as to what caused it in each case. In this case our curiosity is frustrated.

I don't go so far as to say it is insulted. I think Mary McCarthy ignores it not deliberately but innocently. She is not a serious novelist, and I doubt that she takes herself seriously as a novelist. She is one of our most valuable journalists: her reports, criticisms and appreciations are those of an intelligent and knowledgeable witness who is independent of intellectual fashion almost as often as not; but as a novelist

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she has neither the resources nor the inclination to be independent, because for her, as for Upton Sinclair, Lillian Smith, Gwethalyn Graham, Harper Lee, Robert Gover, Chaim Potock, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, Saul Bellow and Jack Heller, the novel is a mode of journalism—as it was before them for Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, Harold Bell Wright, Jack London, Thomas Dixon, Jr., Owen Wister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Charles Kingsley and other writers of comparable quality. All these noble thinkers are or were concerned with great issues, current events, spiritual values, worthwhile objectives, urgent reforms, significant human experience, sensible exercise and sensible eating, to the exclusion of any concern with the art of writing; Mary McCarthy, as her essays and autobiographies show both by their explicit content and by the quality of their prose, is neither indifferent nor insensitive to the art of writing; she is not one to prefer H. G. Wells to Henry James; but when she writes novels you'd think she was. Her characters are little more than allegorical representations of attitudes, values, cultures, points of view, ways of life; the situations in which she puts them serve chiefly as occasions for debate; their conversations, being debates, are of a kind that kills parties and novels; and the novels are little more than series of such debates.

The Kantian or quasi-Kantian epigraph to *Birds of America* tells us plainly enough that Peter is intended to be the representation of an Idea; and on page 265 Mary McCarthy tells us that he is a *flatus voci* [*sic*], though to be sure he has a *principium individuationis.* Even aside from the grammatical or typographical error, this throwing around of terms is pretentious and inaccurate; if, as I doubt, it is supposed to represent by indirection Peter's own thought, it is mildly amusing and invites condescension at an inappropriate moment; but if, as I fear, it represents Mary McCarthy's acquaintance with scholastic philosophy, she should have resisted the temptation to display it. Perhaps, just possibly, the statement is an acknowledgment that Peter is not a person but an abstraction, as the epigraph suggests; but I hope and believe that Mary McCarthy would not do anything so precious. Besides, he is very much a person. His mother also is a person, and a very fine and believable one. To this extent, to the extent of having two real characters, *Birds of America* succeeds as a novel. But the other characters are merely types or caricatures: the Bitterly Provincial New Englander, the School Teacher on Tour, the General, the Concierge, the Embassy Official, the American Student in Paris (three unpleasant subtypes), the Name-Dropping Hostess, the Venal Research-Grant Wangler—this one with the allegorical name Mr. Small! As types they are done well enough, and there are amusing extras here and there, such as this girl in the crowd in the Sistine Chapel: "A girl in a tight sweater who looked as if she had gone to Bennington paced around with long gliding steps, her hands clasped

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behind her back and her long straight hair tossing, like the 'lost' heroine of some neurotic ballet." We have seen her in every museum we have ever visited! The whole scene of which she is a detail is successful, because it includes a number of such details and they give it life—notwithstanding the dull debate in which Mr. Small engages Peter, I mean in which Mary McCarthy engages Mr. Small with Peter. A tour of gardens and "historic" houses in Rocky Port is also successful, and so—brilliantly so—is Peter's grim night in his apartment with a bewildered *clocharde*. But other scenes are curiously lifeless: a student demonstration in Paris, which the police treat as a riot, seems silent and almost still, like a nineteenth-century colored lithograph of a battle; and Peter's outing with a Paris bird-watching club is just words on paper. Sometimes Mary McCarthy's words are remarkably stiff, as in "The crowd on the sidewalk was augmenting" and "Detestation for all and sundry was making Peter nauseous." And there is a chapter that consists entirely of a long Kantian letter from Peter to his mother. It may very well be an exposition of Mary McCarthy's own principles, and they are quite decent principles; but as a contemporary adolescent's letter, even from such a son to such a mother, it is incredible; and it stops the novel dead for 28 pages. Mary McCarthy seems to write novels just as a way of blowing off steam.

Walker Percy's *Love in the Ruins* takes place in 1983. Get it? The narrator is either writing a journal under conditions in which it is physically impossible to write, or talking to an imaginary audience, like Buck Rogers, while fighting for his life, or talking to himself and telling himself things he already knows. However we take it, the form doesn't work:

> Edging the pirogue between the dock and the high water, I climb up, keeping an eye peeled for the fishermen. But the yacht blocks the entire boathouse. Anyhow, it is too dark to be seen under here.
>
> Up the concrete service stairs, little used at best, but which ascend, I know, into a kind of pantry between the kitchen and the men's bar. (I was on the Building Committee.) If the sniper is still in the pro shop and the rest of the building is empty, it should be possible to slide open the panel at the rear of the bar where golfers in the pro shop are served, so saving the floor from their spikes (my sole contribution to the Building Committee). (P. 291.)

This isn't as bad as Buck Rogers ("Now to capture this Martian space ship and get back to Venus before the invading Saturnians start torturing Wilma"), but it belongs to the same genus. The details don't work either: "keeping an eye peeled" and "little used at best, but which ascend, I know," are two entirely different kinds of English,

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representing different styles of thought, different ways of seeing the world, different habits of breathing, different rhythms of living. A writer who attributes both to the same man in the same situation is insensitive or careless or both; if he has any claim to respect as a writer, it must be based on his ideas, not on his art; but of course the two are hardly separable. Bad art makes cheap ideas.

What are Walker Percy's ideas? There seem to be three chief ones: (1) that Nordic American man, the crown of creation and God's favorite race, being obviously far superior to all black, brown, yellow, red, swarthy, slant-eyed and high-cheekboned others, has alas flunked the one test God set him, by mistreating the inferior African man; (2) that the best thing a decent white Southerner can do is to get along as well as he can in society as it is, associating amicably with the most blatant racists, and to keep telling himself that he disapproves of "racism"—i.e., of mistreating the inferior race; (3) that the best hope for charity all around is the Catholic Church, even in its fallen condition. The hero of Percy's last previous novel, *The Last Gentleman* (1966), solved the problem of being a Southern liberal by marrying the daughter of the Confederate Chevrolet Co. in Montgomery, Alabama, accepting a $25,000 job as its personnel manager, and promising himself that he would use his position "to promote tolerance and understanding between the races." He didn't define "tolerance and understanding," but apparently it wasn't anything that would be unacceptable to the owner of the Confederate Chevrolet Co. How long ago that was ! And how little Percy has changed! His new hero, a nutty doctor, is a combination of Greene's whiskey priest, Henry Miller, Dr. Christian and a degraded Faust, who becomes an unwilling scientific collaborator with the devil; and Percy's new technique is a blend of science fiction and seventeenth-century allegory. He plants Biblical allusions everywhere: boobytraps. His hero, Dr. Thomas More, is or believes he is a descendant of the martyred saint, I mean the sainted martyr; his minor characters have allegorical or suggestive names such as Schleifkopf (a Catholic bishop), Jack Bourgeois (a feeble old man), Leroy (a bartender), Moon Mullins (a real estate agent), Victor (a servile or "good" Negro), and Walter Bung (a proctologist or analist: not a psycho-analist, just a plain anal analist). The devil's name is Art.

As I have indicated, the quality of Percy's prose has suffered. There are still honest passages here and there—e.g., the clear observation of Southern mores on pages 149-151 and the deft description of an abandoned shopping plaza on page 9:

> Behind the glass wall of the motel dining room still hangs the Rotary banner:
>
> Is it the truth?

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Is it fair to all concerned?
Will it build goodwill and better friendships?

But the banner is rent, top to bottom, like the temple veil.

But even such easy felicities are rare. The sudden softening that I noticed in the last sixty pages of *The Last Gentleman* (THE HUDSON REVIEW, Autumn 1966, p. 509) has spread pretty generally through *Love in the Ruins.* I think the cause is not intellectual but psychological—or, if you prefer, moral. Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1141) recommends the cultivation of "initial fear," a fear that operates in our innermost depths and makes it impossible for us to have an unorthodox thought (*On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith,* trans. by Roy J. Deferrari, Medieval Academy of America, 1951, pp. 377-378; and cf. Thorstein Veblen, "The Intellectual Preeminence of Jews in Modern Europe," *Essays in Our Changing Order,* Viking Press, 1934). Many people are born with this useful fear; others acquire it, early or late; but no one who has it can do original work. Those in whom it is strongly developed can't even write a sentence that isn't stale in its idea and ordinary in its form: for cheap ideas make bad art. At his worst, Percy imitates bad Faulkner:

> God, was it always the nigger business, now, just as in 1883, 1783, 1683, and hasn't it always been that ever since the first tough God-believing Christ-haunted cunning violent rapacious Visigoth-Westtern-Gentile set foot here with the first black man, the one willing to risk everything, take all or lose all, the other willing to wait and outlast because once he was violated all he had to do was wait because sooner or later the first would wake up and know that he had flunked, been proved a liar where he lived, and no man can live with that. (P. 57, and it gets worse before and on p. 58.)

But many men do live with that. Like Hugh of St. Victor, they choose to live with it. They are proud of it. That's why they write the worst of all lies: banalities: the wisdom of Rotarians and street-corner loafers. To write well takes a certain moral courage. I hope Walker Percy will regain his. After reading *Love in the Ruins,* I hope without conviction. The only reason I hope at all is that when he isn't peddling wisdom he has an excellent ear for Southern speech.

At one point ole Doc Thomas More compares himself to a Renaissance Pope, who didn't believe in God but thought the Church was a good thing. The attitude of George Chambers, hero of James McConkey's *A Journey to Sahalin,* is as far superior to ole Doc's in complexity as it is in dignity and decency. He is dean of students at Brangwen University in Philippa, N. Y. (read Cornell, where McConkey teaches, or SUNY Buffalo, or Kent State, or any other liberal

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school in a conservative community; I suppose the name Brangwen is intended to suggest the original dominance and continuing influence of its agricultural side). His journey to Sahalin is outward as well as inward, as Chekhov's in 1890 was inward as well as outward. For Chambers the Siberian cold of exile is a matter not only of the loss of love and trust but also of the ultimate absolute denial of dignity, murder. I suppose the moral of this story is the Socratic moral that no such external denial has any effect on the dignity of a man who chooses to die rather than inwardly surrender it.

But *A Journey to Sahalin* is a journalistic novel, and better as journalism than as a novel. McConkey says in a brief preface that his insight into "the way public events affect our personal lives and the way our personal lives in turn affect what we do or say in public" grew partly out of his personal involvement in "the disturbing events at Cornell University in 1968-69." The book is, to be sure, a work of imaginative fiction, not a report of any particular actual events; but its chief intention—symbolized by headlines running across the foot of every page like those around the old *New York Times* building in Times Square—is to give us a sense of intimate involvement in current history. Günter Grass has said that *The Tin Drum* is "a political novel, but a novel, not politics." *A Journey to Sahalin* is certainly a novel, and certainly it is not journalism as Kay Boyle's passionate reports in *The Long Walk at San Francisco State* (Grove Press, 1970) are journalism; but McConkey's journalistic intention seems to me to overbalance his novelistic intention. *The Tin Drum* fits Ezra Pound's definition, "Literature is news that *stays* news," more literally than Pound perhaps intended; I'm afraid *A Journey to Sahalin* doesn't fit it as well as we could wish.

McConkey does understand the advantages of fiction for his purpose. He presents a student insurrection from the point of view of a dean of students who is not only an administrator on the way up but also the father of an adolescent son and daughter, the husband of an artist wife, the owner of a house in the country half a mile from a stinking maladministered municipal dump, a political liberal, a student of literature, a corny sentimentalist, a leader of Community Action Now (CAN), a pragmatic man of principle, on the whole a nominalist, and above all a man whose Kantian dignity consists in a never-ending effort to recognize the inextricable intricacy of human situations that have many causes, complex and simple, subtle and brutal, substantial and accidental; to act in a way that will give to every person involved his or her due respect or sympathy or contempt, recognizing that these emotions are by no means mutually exclusive; and in this particular case to come as close as possible to getting justice done—to the students, the institution, his family and himself. McConkey makes us live with Chambers through all his dilemmas, decisions and revisions, up to the moment when he steps between a black student and a sheriff's rifle and is murdered.

Strictly speaking, Chambers' death is an accident: far from being

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the inevitable consequence of the choices he has made, it isn't even statistically likely. It makes a rather disappointing climax for a novel. It is a technical insufficiency; and the technique throughout—for the most part straightforward prosy abstract intellectual exposition—is insufficient to convey the intensity of Chambers' moral struggles. A wholly successful novel must have a large element of poetry. McConkey's prose is not without images—as the following passage shows—but too much of it reads like this, and I think you'll agree that the images, being used as abstractions, don't save it:

> Both Stella and Mark, however, were behaving oddly toward him, as if some new territory, some reach of desert, separated him from them, as if he, or they, were unsubstantial, were mirages floating on the horizon. He assumed this oddness was a consequence of some oddness in himself that he ought, but couldn't, correct. He thought Stella undoubtedly saw this oddness in him as a consequence of *her* betrayal, about which he had said nothing. He was, after all, justified in being strange with her, whatever his wishes that she be as free as she wanted to be. (P. 163.)

No novel that has long stretches of such prose can be wholly successful. Compare the post-honeymoon strangeness between Will and Anna Brangwen. That *stays* news.

II. *The Death of Love*

"The truth is . . . it's so annoying . . . living like this . . . What men and women do to each other. So unnatural. Why can't we just fuck each other and call it quits?" says Janice to Stephen on p. 255 of *An Education in Blood.* But when Plover, on p. 138 of *Getting Off,* tries to reach up under Nicole's dress, she says "No," on the ground that they "barely know each other."

> The next day, when Plover thought about it, it made sense. They were not going to have any casual fuck together. That wasn't what either of them wanted. This was to be more serious. This was to be an affair between friends, and they did not know each other yet well enough for that.

Silly as these statements are, they indicate the two basic positions between which the chief characters in six of the books before me veer back and forth.[2] In *An Education in Blood* it was essentially this dilemma, more than anthing else, that precipitated the madness that made an assistant professor of English murder his wife. In *The Bell Jar* it was essentially this dilemma, more than any schoolgirl notion of chastity, much more than any schoolgirl indecision between the

[2] AN EDUCATION IN BLOOD, by *Richard M. Elman.* Charles Scribner's Sons. $7.95. THE BELL JAR, by *Sylvia Plath.* Harper & Row. $6.95. THE WEEKEND MAN, by *Richard B. Wright.* Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $6.95. JUNGLE LOVERS, by *Paul Theroux.* Houghton Mifflin Co. $5.95. GETTING OFF, by *Don Carpenter.* E. P. Dutton & Co. $5.95.

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freedom of honors English and the scope of regular English, more than even the adult conflict between the values of art and fashion—a conflict that undoubtedly contributed to Sylvia Plath's own breakdown—that led her largely autobiographical heroine into madness. Of the six books, *An Education in Blood* and *The Bell Jar* are the only ones that seem intended to be taken seriously; the others are just harmless commercial entertainments.

An Education in Blood is psychologically valid. Bernard Eastover, having been convicted of murder three times and finally on a fourth try acquitted, has all but convinced himself that he is innocent. Stephen Tolmach, a journalist young enough to be his son, persuades him to talk out the story of his life: a story of hatred for a puritanical father, liberation in college, guilt, dates, guilt, courtship, guilt, marriage, guilt, delightful adultery, guilt guilt guilt, dutiful and increasingly irksome sex at home, guilt disgust guilt, parenthood, guilt, madness, guilt, murder, guilt, madness, guilt, madness, guilt . . . it becomes increasingly evident that he may very well murder his second wife . . . but Stephen—good boy!—takes her away, hurrah. (This isn't Janice, this is Helga. We learn a lot about Stephen too, don't worry.) As you can see, I'm having some difficulty taking *An Education in Blood* as seriously as my cerebral cortex tells me it deserves; but I don't live by the cortex alone, and my ear and the rhythms of my body tell me this book doesn't work. Abstractly yes, concretely no. Toward the end Stephen too is going nuts, and I sympathize, I sympathize. Much of the dialogue is believable, but Eastover's is not; he is, to be sure, presented as an artificial affected bastard, but his compound-complex and periodic sentences are beyond any possibility of belief; they abuse our good will. The worst falsities of language, however, are not his but Elman's. This sort of thing:

> In Stephen's nostrils there is a stench he can neither sniffle up nor blow out. He is much too angry, too sensitive to the possibilities of his own fists for self-degradation. In other words, he feels rather numb. [*In other words? I don't get it.*]
>
> Why? What is it that so oppresses him? Never has he known want or loss. The prospering middle classes of America have been his chief enemies. Born into that tiny nervous chasm between catastrophic Depression and World War II, he saw this "liberal-minded, forward-looking class" at its angry, defeated worst. (p. 36.)
>
> Stephen feels himself being manipulated by this other man's unreason, feels, in truth, like a character in some lengthy dramatic poem that is based entirely on the principle of incongruity. (p. 156.)
>
> Why had he never succumbed? Because he was never that angry? Could always find a way around it somehow? He can reach out his hand and somewhere there will be others. With every new day it must be that there can be. Must be so, Stephen thinks, if only one is not too angry to know what one is angry about—the

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shadow smashed, ax only a chimera. . . . [*How's that again?*] (p. 452.)

What George Orwell said about the actual relation of dictatorship to revolution may also be true of madness and murder: we don't kill because we have gone mad, we go mad in order to kill. But Sylvia Plath's madness had more creditable motives. In a biographical note at the end of *The Bell Jar* Lois Ames quotes from a letter in which Miss Plath stated the theme of the novel:

> the pressures of the fashion magazine world which seems increasingly superficial and artificial, the return home to the dead summer world of a suburb of Boston. Here the cracks in her nature which had been held together as it were by the surrounding pressures of New York widen and gape alarmingly. More and more her warped view of the world around—her own vacuous domestic life, and that of her neighbors—seems the one right way of looking at things. (p. 286.)

That a sensitive person could take such a view of things in the early 1950's was quite understandable. On the other hand, many sensitive people didn't. I think Miss Ames's implication that the political atmosphere was to blame is mistaken. I think the real trouble was far deeper: whatever weakness it was that made Sylvia Plath of all people get involved with a fashion magazine in the first place. Miss Ames quotes some of the whorish eyelid-fluttering prose she wrote for it. Only a person of much coarser grain, or one with much more initial fear than Sylvia Plath had, could have continued to accept the meretricious values that that meretricious prose represents. It stinks of dollar-a-quart perfume. "Under a vapid picture of the guest editors holding hands in star formation, dressed alike in tartan skirts with matching Eton caps and open-mouthed smiles, she wrote:

> We're stargazers this season, bewitched by an atmosphere of evening blue. Foremost in the fashion constellation we spot *Mlle*'s own tartan, the astronomic versatility of sweaters, and men, men, men—we've even taken the shirts off their backs! Focussing our telescope on college news around the globe, . . ." (p. 283.)

Glancing over my shoulder, my wife laughs in unbelief and says, "You male chauvinist pig!" But I didn't write that sickening stuff, Sylvia Plath wrote it. It literally made her sick. The shame of it stayed with her all her life, and ultimately killed her. Aside from being very heavy on décor and couture and coiffure, even in circumstnces that make the emphasis inappropriate and distracting, the prose of *The Bell Jar* doesn't show that influence. There are no phony breathlessnesses here. Miss Plath finally achieved a more dignified feminine life. *The Bell Jar* is the record of her struggle up from fashion, and of her bad memories.

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As for the remaining three books in this batch, the commercial entertainments, with a few changes of name and tense and person they are practically interchangeable:

> She kisses me on the nose and sits up. Through half-closed lids I watch her reach behind to unfasten her brassiere. Then she pulls the sweater over her head and hikes up her skirt to unhook her garter belt. (*The Weekend Man,* pp. 145-146.)
>
> Finally she was white and naked. She sat on the edge of the bed and then lay back, her hands crossing her breasts, her eyes sparkling. (*Getting Off,* p. 141.)
>
> Calvin turned Mira over onto her back, lifted and parted her legs, cupped her cool bottom and entered her snugness in a single thrust. (*Jungle Lovers,* p. 32.)

This isn't quite fair to *Jungle Lovers,* which deals with the lives of whites and blacks in a newly liberated African country and has a delightful corny character named Major Beaglehole—a blend of Colonel Blimp, Major Hoople, Cecil Rhodes, Gordon Pasha, Glubb Pasha, Lawrence of Arabia, General Bullmoose, the Duke of Wellington, Commander Schweppes, Dean Acheson, Sir Teabag Lipton, Colonel Finger-Lickin' Good and General Jubilation T. Lee—but it's a representative and adequate sample of the prose.

III. *A Rabelaisian*

"Rabelais," said Victor Hugo, "is the huge mask of ancient comedy detached from the Greek proscenium, the bronze made flesh, henceforth a living human face, but still enormous, coming to laugh at us, among us and with us." With the possible exceptions of Joyce and Cervantes, no other comic novelist has ever been of such size; but now and then a lesser one comes along whose gusto and drive can fairly be called Rabelaisian. Mordecai Richler is Rabelaisian. I am writing this in July, when I love to go out at 6 a.m. and walk or run barefooted through the wet grass; but one morning recently I got up and finished reading *St. Urbain's Horseman* instead. There isn't another current book that could have kept my feet out of that grass.[3]

Richler has been compared to Philip Roth, and *St. Urbain's Horseman* to *Portnoy's Complaint;* but there is neither judgment nor justice in such comparisons. In the first place, Richler has self-respect. He isn't interested in being picturesque for the *goyim.* He respects the work he does; and that necessarily entails respecting his readers. In the second place, he is a good technician. *St. Urbain's Horseman* has a plot: a good old-fashioned plot with suspense from beginning to middle to end—a legitimate device that serious modern writers alas have generally abandoned to hacks who have no other devices. What a pleasure it is to read a good contemporary novel with a plot! It also has a legendary character, a living absolute, an ideal knight

[3] ST. URBAIN'S HORSEMAN, by *Mordecai Richler.* Alfred A. Knopf. $7.95.

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with many reproaches but not the one most shameful reproach of all, that of being a nice boy at all costs, for indeed he will not be a nice boy at any cost however small. This ideal, the Horseman, avenger of the Jews, lives in the soul of Jake Hersh, a well-to-do director of plays, movies and TV shows, who imagines him to be incarnate in his criminal cousin Joey, alias Jesse Hope; with Joey's death, Jake dreams of assuming the role of the Horseman—the role of Aaron or "the Golem, a sort of Jewish Batman"—but at the moment when the idea first strikes him he is more interested in going to bed with his wife, and besides, the bullets in Joey's pistol were blanks. Jake is after all a nice boy. He is no Aaron, and in all probability no Jesse: these is no hope in the likes of him; but he does recognize the ideal when others don't.

It is quite evident that Mordecai Richler himself has something of Joey's uncompromising character, for he has the moral courage that is a necessary condition for writing good prose. Compare with Roth's easy clichés the freshness of skeptical Uncle Abe's comments on Jews who work and fight for every minority except the Jews:

> They lay into me about Harlem, the *tzoris* of the Eskimos, Indian braves without hope. Vietnam. Cuba. Look here, I said, this is Abraham Hersh you're looking at. I am a reasonably good fellow. I am responsible for none of the world's ills. Whatever I got, I earned. Napalm's not my invention. I never lynched anybody. I'm sorry you're not black and beautiful, but only a Jewish child. For me, it's the thoughts of Rabbi Akiba, not Chairman Mao. And this *pisherke* pipes up, he says, they're the love generation, they're for peace, they give each other flowers. Big news, eh, Yankel? What am I, I say, the hate generation? A war-monger? When I was chasing after girls, did I hand out poison ivy, I said it with flowers too. No, no, I don't dig it. This kid says when they have a rock concert, thousands of them from miles around, there's no rough stuff. I answered him, listen here, shmock, if I go to an affair at the synagogue, or a Mozart concert, we don't pour out of the hall with clubs, splitting heads. Why should you be amazed that your concerts don't end in a riot? What's so special? (pp. 408-409.)

IV. *Satire-Shmatire*

Some things, said Dr. Johnson, are "ridiculous beyond the power of satire to exaggerate." Jerzy Kosinski's *Being There* mocks our political life, and Charles Newman's *The Promise-Keeper* mocks our corporate culture, but no more—literally no more—than these things mock themselves.[4] In *Being There* a low-grade moron or high-grade imbecile, illiterate and impotent, by giving out with honest clichés about how if you want a good garden you've got to water it and pull

[4] BEING THERE, by *Jerzy Kosinski*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $4.95. THE PROMISE-KEEPER, by *Charles Newman*. Simon & Schuster. $7.95.

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up the weeds, impresses everybody as a profound economic thinker and is nominated for the Vice-Presidency of the United States. It's convincing, but so what? And *The Promise-Keeper* is full of parodies of gradeless report cards, parodies of business letters, parodies of management-consultant reports, parodies of nutty-reformer books, parodies of psychoanalysts' advice, and unconscious parodies of the prose of novels like *Getting off, The Weekend Man* and *The Promise-Keeper.* So what else is new?

V. *A Distinguished Ethnic Novel*

Peter Najarian's *Voyages* is the best novel I have read in a long time.[5] It deals with the life of an Armenian boy growing up in West Hoboken, N. J., between his parents' memories of massacres in Armenia and his contemporaries' various ideas of how to make it in America. We follow him as he studies the humanities and works unloading trucks of oranges, to Greenwich Village, Harlem, Passaic, London, with girls, with his older brother whom he hates, with his father, his mother, his uncles, friends, and there isn't a false note from the first page to the last. This is one of the very few books of which it would be accurate to say that I respected and enjoyed every sentence. It is Peter Najarian's first. Watch him, people, watch him. He is going to be one of our most distinguished novelists.

VI. *And Some Distinguished Short Stories*

"The more documents one digested, the more one was digested by the firm. I had to remind myself that my whole ambition was assimilation into that mystic body." This is from "The Dock-Witch," in Cynthia Ozick's *The Pagan Rabbi and Other Stories* (P. 146). "Everything that Miss Tate possessed in the world was at the disposal of Miss Blodgett, except one thing—the family blood." This is from "The Small Bequest," in Mary Lavin's *Collected Stories* (P. 231). "Nicotine-stained, servile, sterile, smooth, well-combed, blue-shaven, jaundiced, with trousers empty at the back and fat pockets at the sides, crooked heels and chronically sweaty collar—the little waiter." This is from "Thithyputh," in Wolfgang Borchert's *The Man Outside* (P. 240). The high density of each of these sentences indicates the high quality of these three collections of short stories.[6] I think Cynthia Ozick is as good as Isaac Bashevis Singer, and more consistently good. I think Mary Lavin is at least as good as Frank O'Connor. I wish Wolfgang Borchert had lived long enough to win his struggle against sentimentality and develop his considerable talent more fully. These three collections of stories are all news that *stays* news.

Perhaps some day the Muse will tell us what song the sirens sang.

[5] VOYAGES, by *Peter Najarian.* Pantheon Books. $5.95.

[6] THE PAGAN RABBI AND OTHER STORIES, by *Cynthia Ozick.* Alfred A. Knopf. $6.95. COLLECTED STORIES, by *Mary Lavin.* Houghton Mifflin Co. $8.95. THE MAN OUTSIDE, by *Wolfgang Borchert.* New Directions. $5.75.

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JAMES P. DEGNAN

Pillow Talk[1]

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF REASONS why I find reading "America's liveliest social critic"—which is what the blurb of *Surviving the 70's* tells us Professor Benjamin DeMott is—a bore. For one, Professor DeMott, like a bad joke teller, has a terrible time getting to the point—a fault frequently attributable to his having no point to get to. Rather than getting to the point—and this is especially true in *Surviving the 70's,* a book that might well have been issued as a pillow—DeMott, typically, substitutes instances illustrating nothing, wheel-spinning buildups going nowhere; and, consequently, his essays—e.g., such pieces from *Surviving the 70's* as "Journal of a Campus Strike," "Ecological Summons," "I Can't Sign," and "Beyond the Ratrace"—emerge as little more than hastily contrived, loose collections of unsubordinated notes, gleanings from the Professor's wastebasket. I read carefully, at least five times, "Ecological Summons," and I am still not sure what the point is. The basic tone and strategy of the piece indicate that its intention is to attack—via a seemingly endless catalogue of quotes ranging from Richard Nixon to David Brower, from the John Birch Society to U Thant—fashionable ecological cliches and bandwagon ecologists. Given the essay's tone and strategy, the only possible justification for all these quotes is that DeMott is building up to showing us how misleading the quotes are and how misled and insincere those quoted are; but he ends up—albeit under cover of protective obscurity—*agreeing* with the people he quotes.

Professor DeMott's pointlessness is paralleled by his pseudo-points, by, for instance, his frequent strawman arguments. In "I Can't Sign," for example, he argues that he could not sign the Columbia Statement—a document urging American professors to unite in opposition to any party or group violently disrupting or attempting to take over American universities—because, he writes, "behind the Statement" he can hear the "stony, armored tones . . . of the old anti-experiential rag." By which remark the Professor means for us to believe that the Columbia Statement commits its signers to opposing experimental programs in higher education—e.g., off campus programs based on practical ("experiential") rather than academic knowledge. Now anyone who has read the Columbia Statement (put together largely by Jacques Barzun and Lionel Trilling after the riots at Columbia University, and a statement, if nothing else, admirable in its clarity)

1 SUPERGROW, by *Benjamin DeMott.* E. P. Dutton. $5.95. SURVIVING THE 70's, by *Benjamin DeMott.* E. P. Dutton. $5.95.

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knows that it has nothing to do with prohibiting experimental programs in higher education. On the contrary, what the Columbia Statement—by condemning violence and threats of intimidation, by, in short, guaranteeing academic freedom and freedom of speech—seeks to do is to insure that all university programs, experimental as well as traditional, will be protected against those who would destroy them by violence.

Were the Professor to use his strawman to some purpose—were he, for instance, to show specifically *what* experimental programs the wicked reactionaries in their "stony, armored tones" oppose—"I Can't Sign," if disingenuous, might at least be less tiresome. But in lieu of specific examples, he substitutes an ingredient that constitutes much of the substance of the writing in *Supergrow* and, especially, in *Surviving the 70's:* gibberish. Searching the Professor's essays for samples of some of the "experimental" programs those signing or sympathizing with the Columbia Statement are supposed to jeopardize, what we come up with is: programs "exploring the connections between disciplinary models and the edge of lived experience"; programs of "personal growth"; programs "adjusted to the huge variousness of the means by which men develop power and understanding . . ." and so forth. How can any clearheaded person—sympathetic with the Columbia Statement or not—oppose *or* support such programs? How can any clearheaded person, proceeding from DeMott's prose, even know what such programs are?

It is rather pathetic to see DeMott writing such gibberish because, not too many years ago, he was, if not a first-rate writer (his prose, at best, has always lacked force), at least a reasonably clearheaded one. The best of the essays in these two volumes, for example, is the oldest: "Against McLuhan," an attack—far too timid—on the grand champion of gibberish. But a sinister thing happened to the Professor's mind over recent years—he apparently has fallen under the spell of the McLuhanacy he once attacked. His mind, exposed to the intellectual insanity of the 1960's—and I know of no decade when there has been more intellectual insanity, e.g., in which such nonsense babblers as McLuhan, Norman O. Brown, Susan Sontag, Herbert Marcuse, Tim Leary, Charles Reich, R. D. Laing, Theodore Roszak, Louis Kampf, Noam Chomsky and the many others made in the image and likeness of the Grove Press and the *New York Review of Books* have been so highly revered as geniuses and prophets—went the way of a popsicle in a heat wave. I am not saying that Professor DeMott, like many other soggy-pated critics—e.g., Richard Kostelanetz, Tom Wolfe, Walter Ong, S. J., William Phillips (the last of whom we have to thank for discovering Susan Sontag)—has served as an ardent and dedicated champion of these people; though, with the exception of McLuhan, he certainly has not attacked them, and, in the two volumes under consideration—especially in *Surviving the 70's*—he

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seems sympathetic to them in style and attitude. What I *am* saying is that, consciously or unconsciously, the Professor, like many other academics who have achieved "national visibility" (as the academic trade would have it) has climbed on the nonsense bandwagon, has taken his lessons from McLuhan and others of the incredibly successful babbler tribe; such lessons, for example, as: 1) use the language of the "kids," such language as "isness," "innerness," "openness," "authentic," "growth," "relevant," "livingness," "non-emergent occasions" (all of which the Professor uses with regularity); 2) generalize—avoid empirical evidence; and 3) always deliver your generalizations in the prophetic, apocalyptic tone—the "kids" dig it.

And not only do the "kids" dig it, but the commercial reviewers (another wing of the "kids"?) also dig it. Referring to one of the essays in *Supergrow*—"Reading, Writing, Reality and Unreality"—a piece in which the Professor calls for revolution in the teaching of undergraduate and graduate programs in English, *Newsweek* calls his crusade a "one man campaign to make his profession aware of the problems it faces." What are these monumental problems that the Professor, in heroic isolation, is trying, apparently in vain, to make his insensitive peers aware of? One searches diligently through the essay in question and comes up with only one: that English profs are giving too much emphasis to the New Criticism as a means of teaching English (hardly an observation of earthshattering originality). There is still, to quote the Professor, too much talk about "structure and design" (about the relations of images, about the interplay of dramatic units, about multiple ambiguities and so forth) in teaching literature. "Reducing" the teaching of English to such matters, warns the Professor, is almost as bad as "reducing it to teaching correctness," or "acquainting students with the classics" (an inexcusable pedagogical blunder), or to "taste tests" or to creating "colorful composition." Well and good; let's grant the Professor his point. What, then, *is* English about? How, then, should it be taught? "English," DeMott writes in the appropriate apocalytic tone, is "about my distinctness and the distinctness of other human beings." Teaching a poem should not be a matter of reading the poem "perfectly" or of determining "the goodness or badness of the poem," he goes on. "Neither item matters as much as our opportunity to move with young minds to consciousness of how people go about making a sense of themselves as related in significant ways to the public weal . . ." and so on and on and on like a giant, ever building whorl of cotton candy.

Reading such jabber, it occurs to me that if the Professor really wants to make "his profession aware of the problems it faces," he might address that profession in clear English. What in God's name does "English is about my distinctness" supposed to mean? Is Shakespeare's "Winter" or "Spring" or "Song" about "*my* distinctness"? Is

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Tennyson's "The Eagle"? Of course not; these poems don't have a thing to do with "*my* distinctness." Unless, of course, the Professor, for some reason, means something entirely different from what the term actually means; in which case, I wish he would have the decency to tell us precisely what he does mean. But were he to do so, his meaning, I am convinced, would be so banal it wouldn't warrant notice. And the Professor, as I have remarked, has obviously learned from the nonsense masters of the past decade that the secret of being noticed, of being widely published and lionized as a culture critic, is: Having nothing to say, say it pretentiously and prophetically—the "kids," of whatever age, will dig it.

Reading the Professor's breathless plans for revolutionizing the teaching of English (as well as other of his breathless plans)—reading about the immediate necessity of our "restructuring generational relationships" and of our teaching poems so that "we move young minds [older students presumably are excluded from poetry classes] to consciousness of how people go about making a sense of themselves as related in significant ways" and so forth—I am moved to ask a sacrilegious and philistine question, a question I am moved to ask when reading other contemporary prophets: prophets like Theodore Roszak when he tells us the counter culture can exist without a main culture; prophets like R. D. Laing when he tells us we must abandon "objective consciousness"; prophets like Alan Harrington (author of *The Immortalist*) when he tells us we must "refuse aging and death" and live forever; prophets like Norman O. Brown when he demands that we (mankind) must "accept the androgynous mode of being," that we must be in "revolt against sexual differentiation and genital organization"; reading these people, I am moved to ask the question: HOW? And it seems to me that if more editors and publishers would ask this question, there might be a sizable decrease in prophet production to the immense profit of us all.

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